

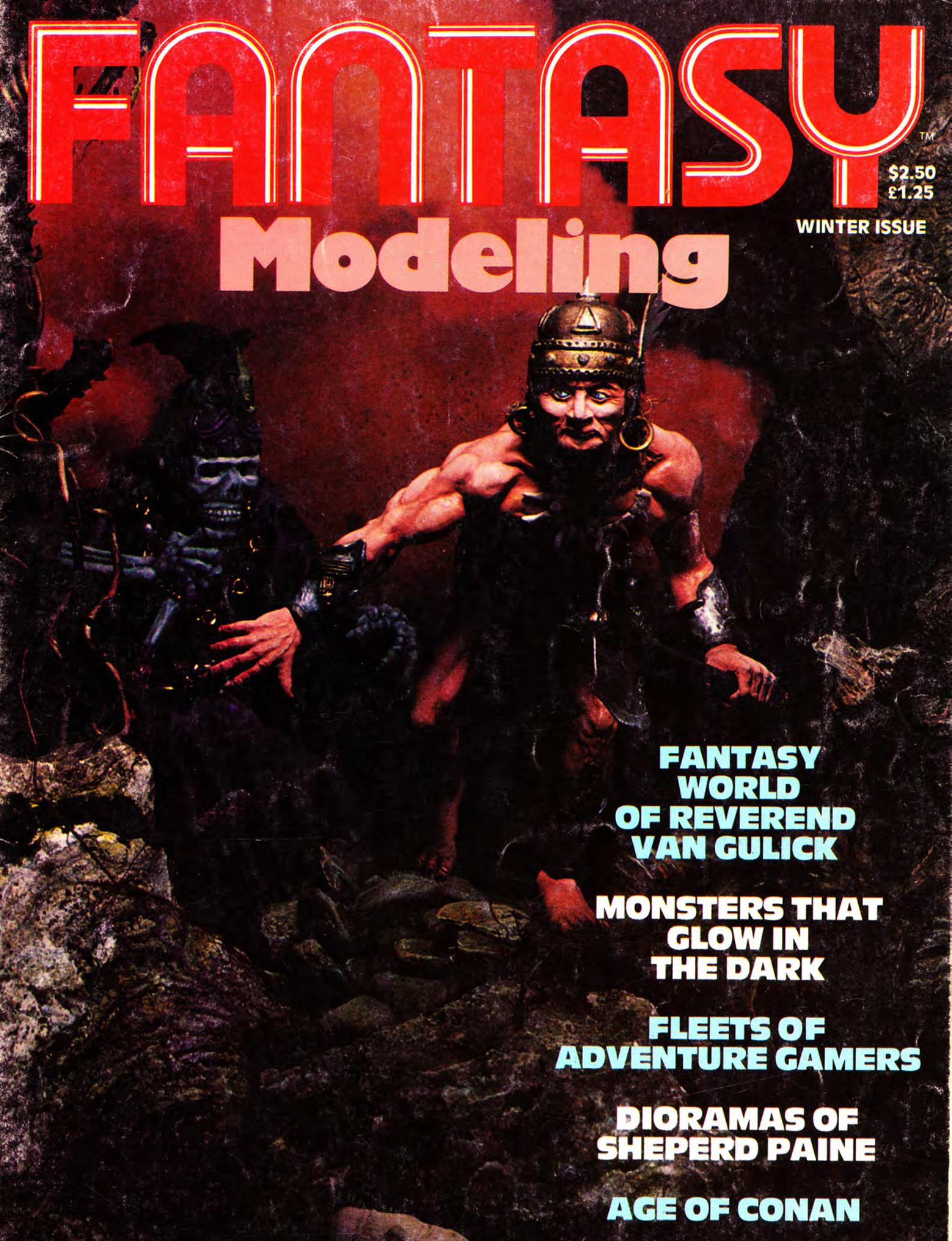
# FANTASY

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**FANTASY  
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OF REVEREND  
VAN GULICK**

**MONSTERS THAT  
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**FLEETS OF  
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**DIORAMAS OF  
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**AGE OF CONAN**

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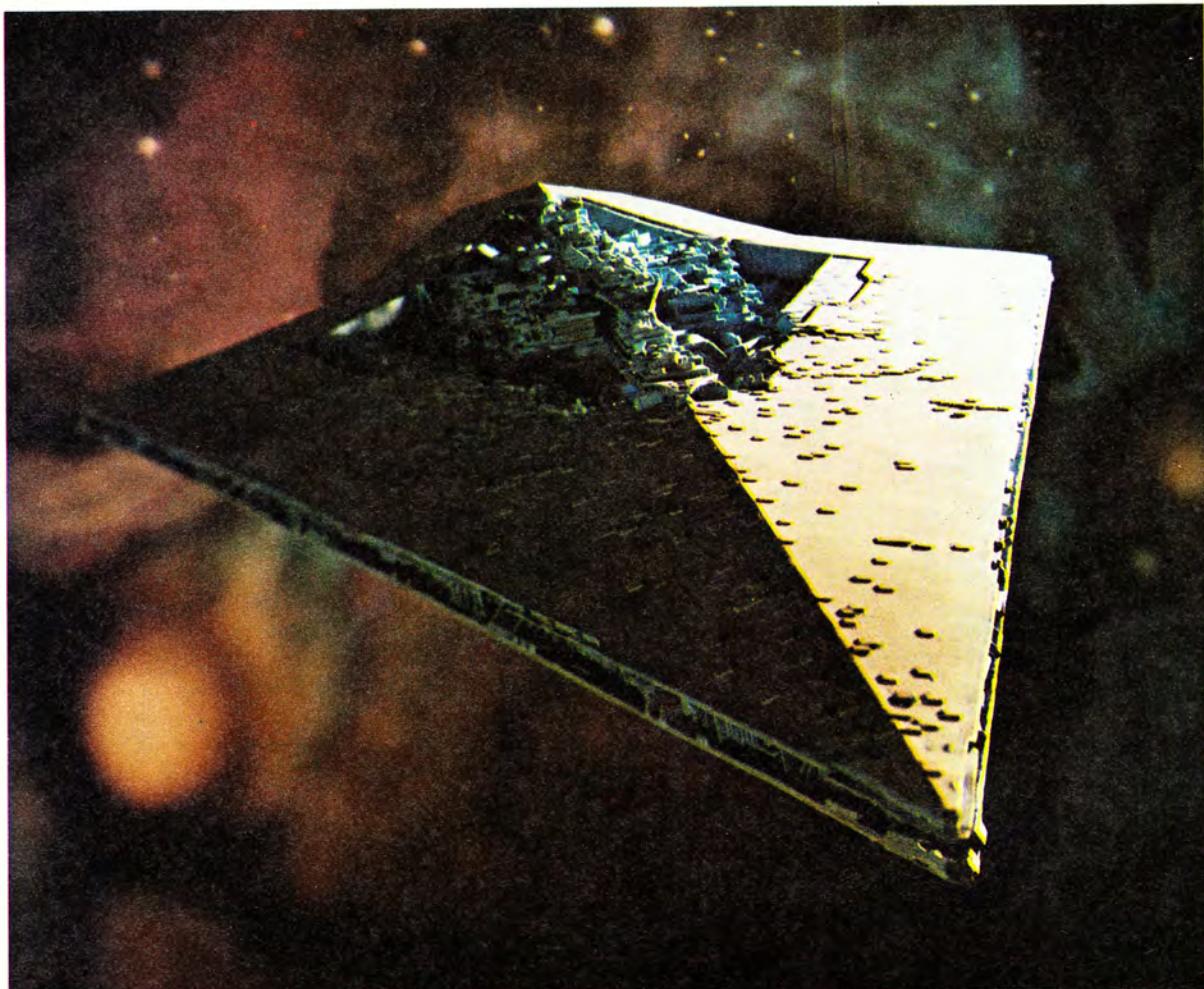
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# FANTASY

## Modeling

WINTER ISSUE



A beautiful scratchbuilt model of Darth Vader's Star Destroyer by modeler Tom Knowles.

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**ABOUT THE COVER**

This beautiful boxed diorama is the work of the Reverend Spencer van Gulick whose magnificent models are examined further in our feature article in this issue.

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# EDITORIAL



**F**antasy Modeling has been out among you, the public, and it is now time to examine how you feel and what you would like to see that we have not been able to anticipate. Although your mail to us was somewhat limited, there were some very strong feelings expressed. In an effort to cater to these we are making certain adjustments in our format as we strive to improve this publication.

The first criticism, and, I feel, a justifiable one, was that there was not enough material on how to paint, weather and super-detail spaceships and plastic kits. In order to enlarge this section we have been fortunate in acquiring the services of several recognized experts in the field. Andrew Yanchus was formerly employed as design adviser to the Aurora Company and has continued his keen interest in plastic modeling ever since as a member of the I.P.M.S. Dave Cockrum, who is also a very outstanding plastic modeler and a comic strip artist, will be bringing us articles on his own scratch-building as well as an illustrated "how to" series in each issue. To further supplement this department we will have articles from a U.S. Navy modeler who builds only space hardware from specific plans. We also hope to have on hand articles from Martin J. Bower whose work has graced such films as *Space 1999* and *Star Wars*. So I feel that in the future your requests in this department will be properly catered to.

There were also a large number of complaints about the typographical errors, and the flipping and mis-captioning of photographs. I know there can be no justifiable excuses for such mistakes

and I humbly apologise for these. I will only say in small defense that this issue was put together in a scrambled hurry and without a set staff. We hope that these vagaries will be under far greater control in the future.

Several mentions were made of having a modelers' photo competition in each issue. I think this would be an added inducement for you to send us photographs of your work and I heartily endorse this excellent idea. However, I do request that all material for the next issue should be in our hands by March 1, 1981.

Some of you complain that we should not be getting involved with war games. My reply to that is *Fantasy Modeling* must include all aspects of its title. Any time you participate in a role playing or war game you are indulging in fantasy. We must therefore include this in our format.

One other aspect that your letters has made very clear is that we failed to include sources of distribution and supply for the manufactured articles we carry editorially. This is a very cogent fact and we shall certainly see that anything we show has an address to which you can write for purchasing information. We cannot, of course, be responsible for what our advertisers say in their ads.

All in all, I was very gratified by your mail which was on the whole very constructive and helpful. In the next issue we shall endeavor to include a "letters" section and we hope you will consider keeping us posted as to your specific interest and requirements.

Philip O. Stearns

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# THE FANTASY WORLD OF THE REVEREND SPENCER VAN GULICK

A minister brings Heavenly inspiration to his creative muse

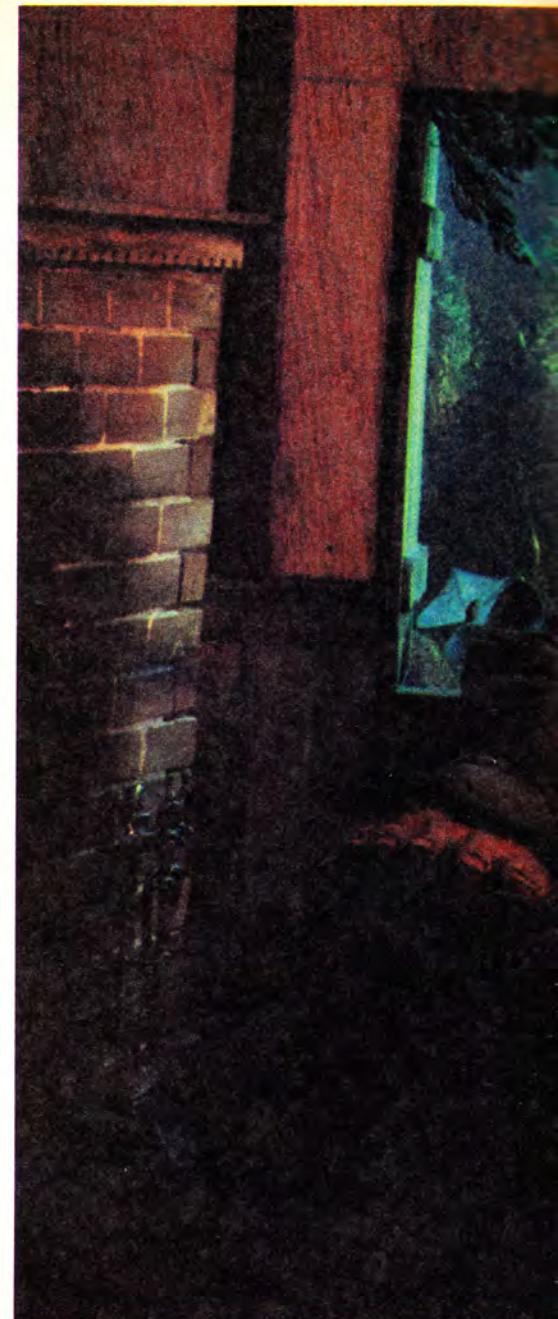
By PHILIP O. STEARNS

The annual competition of The Military Miniature Society of Illinois is without doubt the most prestigious in the United States. Due to its unique system of judging, a Gold Medal at this event is a genuinely outstanding award inasmuch as the yearly number awarded has averaged only three and these go to the truly recognized masters of the art. In 1979, a modeler unknown to the vast majority of the fraternity burst upon the scene with a resounding blast. Who is this incredible Rev. Spencer van Gulick? Where has he been and just who is he? were the cries of all the judges and participants suddenly staggered by his work. At the end of the competitions, the membership and the public were equally stunned by the fact that the handsome young Reverend van Gulick emerged with an unprecedented two Gold Medals, the Best Exhibitor's Award and the Best of Show Award. This was certainly quite a monumental

collection of outstanding laurels for an almost totally unknown artist to garnish at his first appearance in this venue although they were richly deserved.

But what sort of a man is van Gulick and from whence comes that rich imagination and creative spark that drives a Presbyterian Minister into these wild flights of fantasy? To find out and at his invitation I journeyed to the modest town of Sharon, nestled in the north west corner of Pennsylvania, to visit with him and his family for a few truly elevating days. The Manse House bordering the Bethlehem United Presbyterian Church is a veritable museum of boxed dioramas, vignettes and single figures all reflecting his expression of life, of soul and of fantasy and reality.

His early work includes a variety of commercially produced military and civil figures in various scales. Although all of these are outstandingly painted and placed in exquisitely rendered set-



**The Ambush makes use of a single commercial figure in its created setting.**

tings, it is not until he started creating his own fantasy figures that his genius truly emerged. At the outset, the sculptural quality of Tim Richards from Phoenix Model Developments much attracted him. His inclusion of some of these figures in his own fantasy settings are what really make his work outstanding. In 1975 he started sculpting and creating his own figures. At first these were war-like creatures of his imagination, perhaps the outstanding of which is the Skullslayer. His latest creation, Guess Who's Coming To Dinner, reveals a delicious touch of humor combined with the real and fantasy, making the scene completely believable. This is true of another charming scene in the diorama, Is That You, Daddy? This is of a small boy in his sail-boat-decorated Dr. Denton pajamas standing just outside a country cottage door in answer to a knock and as yet



PHOTOS: PHILIP O. STEARNS

**Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?** embodies all of van Gulick's storytelling philosophy in diorama building.

unaware of the pixies and beasties in the woods observing him.

In all of his work, outside the strictly military, there are several strong influences revealed. Illustrators Arthur Rackham and more recently Brian Froud have made deep impressions on both his visual and painting approach to his subjects. Both of these artists have a very monochromatic sense of color and seem to be strongly attracted to the shapes and forms of trees. Spencer says, "I don't often admit this to people, but I find a great spiritual relationship with trees and forests. I can commune with them and there exists a



**Who would think of a tree playing checkers with a demon?**

silent communication between us. At times it has been so strong that I have just gone up and hugged a tree." An afternoon we spent hunting roots by a local river bank made this totally comprehensible to me as we both kept discovering the same roots at the same time. The similarity of Spencer's "creatures" with those of Brian Froud is inescapable, but Spencers are entirely the products of his own imagination. Another influence which led him into the world of miniatures was a favorite uncle, David, a medical illustrator at Michigan University. This man's talents included landscape and portraiture as well as the creation of small animated figures which eventually ended up in commercially edited football and boxing games. Spencer spent every available moment of his childhood vacations in his uncle's studio and it is apparent that much of what he saw there remained engraved in his memory.

"You will have a hard time writing anything about my methods or techniques in modeling because I honestly don't know what I do or how I go about it. When I get an idea and it is firmly implanted in my mind, I just go down to the basement and start to put it together," he told me.

"That is a great oversimplification," I replied. "But let's start at the beginning. Where do you get your ideas and how is it that they are so deeply rooted in the world of gnomes, goblins, grotesques and the 'little people'?"

"Well, I suppose it is due to the fact of my very strict upbringing in my childhood and that I really never had time to daydream or fantasize. When I rediscovered the art of miniatures I was able to release all of my pent up fantasies and my over-active imagination into



**Spencer and his wife, Ginny, contemplate the progress of his Speaking Tree diorama, inspired by Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.**



**An inn during the eighteenth century, using Phoenix figures.**

this medium. My early readings were the Greek and Roman myths, the books of Sir Thomas Mallory, James Fennimore Cooper, the short stories of Poe, Knickerbocker and later Robert E. Howard, C.S. Lewis and L. Sprague deCamp. All this fantasy reading along with the movies filled my already over-active mind with enough images to create a whole unreal world to live in. Thank God, I chose not to live in that world. However, it is all there in pictures in my mind."

It was the miniatures that released these fantasies into physical realities. As with most of us, he learned the basic techniques of three-dimensional painting, ground work, realistic water, the construction of buildings, towers, moats and fountains and the designing of trees, cobwebs and grotesques primarily by trial and error, for, to his dismay, there is a great paucity of modeling talent in his area. Fortunately there is a very complete craft shop in town

and many of his own particular tricks have evolved from visits to this emporium as well as from his many explorations into the natural wonders of the local country side. His library is also a surprising one, for it is almost uniquely devoted to books by illustrators, artists and science fiction and fantasy authors as well as naturalists, sculptors and military historians.

Although all this represents reference material, Spencer firmly declares, "I want to create, not re-create. I think the making of a diorama is definitely an art form and not just a craft. This is one of the reasons that mine are so heavily oriented towards fantasy subjects because I have no basic desire to re-create authenticities. The diorama is the depiction of a reality or fantasy by a scene or setting which tells a story. The true essence of this is that it should portray the moment before something is about to happen. If possible, more than one possibility should be suggested. In this manner the viewers will be constantly returned to the scene. One of my pet peeves about most commercially produced figures is that they are all posed like statues. When you are producing your own figures you should try to capture an informal attitude instead of a pose. When you are doing a single figure a suggestion of humor is an effective way of capturing that attitude."

Spencer's lovely wife, Ginny, and his



**Land Ho!** is a combination of a scratchbuilt with a Phoenix figure.

two sons, Jim, 11 and Chip, 7 have all been influenced by his preoccupation with modeling. Ginny, who is the choir leader and soloist in the Church, has become a very good sculptress on her own and both the boys are participating in various modeling enterprises under the supervision of their father. Ginny also lends her support to her husband in many of his projects.

As to technical details, it isn't that he is the least bit reluctant in divulging any of them, it is simply that he admits he really does not know exactly how he

sets about creating a boxed diorama. Briefly, the figures are created with sculpey and cheap toilet paper impregnated with sculpey. Recently he has been working in 1/12 scale due to the discovery and availability of doll-house accessories. The paints he uses include artists' oils of various makes, acrylics, model paints such as Humbrols, Testors, Poly-s and Floquil. Two of his most ubiquitous modeling tools are a hot glue gun and a large stapling gun. "My carpentry is very basic and a catch as catch can variety and as long as things



The strong influence of Brian Froud can be seen in this work.



This figure, entirely scratchbuilt by Ginny van Gulick, proves that all the talent is not in Spencer's hands.



The bucolic atmosphere of an English country village.



The Slaying of Satha is a fantasy interpretation using a stock human figure.



"Is that you, Daddy?"

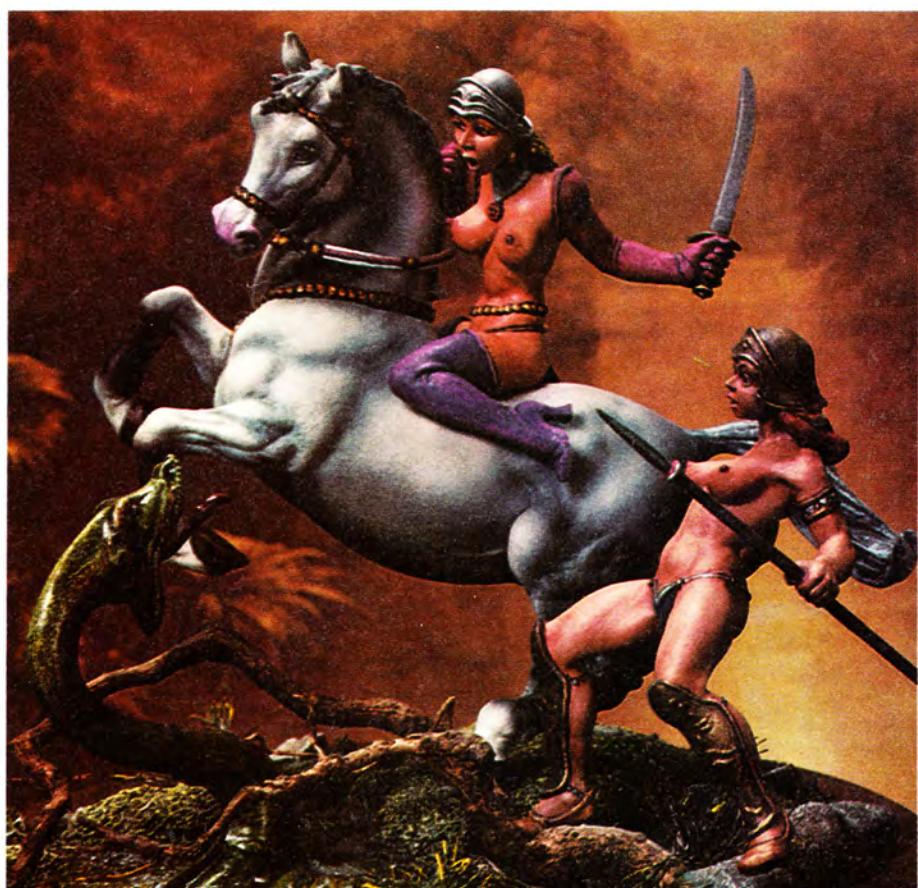
stick together, I'm satisfied," he says. What really distinguishes his settings is his really beautiful ground work which is characterized by his search for very specific roots, grape vines, sphagnum moss and the specific variety of rocks used. When it comes to particular details, as for instance, the broken flower pot in the Guess Who's Coming To Dinner diorama, his advice is very specific.

"I really had no idea how to make a broken flower pot look natural. So after thinking about it for a bit, I thought the only way of doing it was to take an actual miniature flower pot, drop it on the ground and then photograph it from several angles. When I got the pictures back I then reassembled all the bits and pieces as in the photographs. I guarantee the results were far more natural than if I had just experimented on my own." For his fantasy dioramas he prefers the use of dull monochromatic colors in understated drabs which are very much the essence of Rackham and Froud.

He leaves us with some excellent advice for those wishing to embark on their own sculptures: "If you have a choice of buying a book on sculpture or one on surface anatomy, always buy the one on surface anatomy!" In this category he recommends two excellent titles, *Dynamic Figure Drawing* by Burne Hogarth and *The Human Figure* by David K. Rubin. For those keen on the mysteries of the out of doors he suggests *The Living Forest* by Rien Poortvliet. If you are further interested in good art publications we both suggest that you write to Watson-Guptil Publications, 2160 Patterson Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45214 and ask that you be put on their catalog mailing list. They are perhaps the finest publishers and distributors of fine art books.

In leaving Spencer van Gulick I feel that my life has been made richer and broader by the association with this remarkable artist, a man of the cloth totally devoid of any hypocrisies and filled

with a glowing warmth and humor as well as a gentle humility. His wife, Ginny, tells me his sermons are indeed compelling and inspirational. I say his congregation is indeed lucky to have such a man as their spiritual leader. We of the modeling fraternity are also lucky to have such a visionary artist to continue to inspire us. △



A surprise encounter in a swamp catches two startled Amazons.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## Hints and tips for plastic modeling



**HINTS AND TIPS FOR PLASTIC MODELING.** Edited by Burr Angle, Published by Kalmbach Books, 48 pages, black & white photos and illustrations, \$3.95.

There have been dozens of books and magazine articles on "How to Build Plastic Models." They have all covered the same ground and they all tend to look the same. It seems that every author of these books feels obliged to start his dissertation by aiming at the six-year-old who doesn't even know what a plastic kit is, and progressing to the detailing tips of the latest "Best In Show" winner of the International Plastic Modelers' Society National contest! Quite often, products and tools that the reader has never heard of are mentioned, but never shown. Illustrations are usually photos of finished models that are supposed to show the end result of some particular hint or tip. "Sure," you say, "Those are great books! What could be better?" *Hints and Tips for Plastic Modeling* from Kalmbach Books is the answer.

This book is unique in every way you look at it. To start with, it's a compilation of information taken from all the various IPMS national and local chapter publications. The ideas presented in this book came from dozens of sources, not from just one or two writers, and the amount of fresh material is staggering.

Then, unlike other building and tips books that present everything from "How to Open the Kit Box" to "Packing for the Big Contest" in a continuous narrative, this book spits out hints and tips in Vulcan cannon rapidity. There is no wasted time or space with fancy words used solely to bridge separate

ideas. Each of the book's 255 bits of information (they are all numbered) has its own bold title, and stands on its own as a complete, helpful hint. You don't have to read this book from start to finish. You can flip through it and pick out tips in particular areas that are troubling you, and the layout makes it easy to go back and find specific hints.

All of these hints and tips are arranged in a logical sequence and are divided into seven related areas: 1) Tools and Workbench Equipment, 2) Assembly, 3) Masking, Painting and Decaling, 4) Canopies and Cockpits, 5) Detailing, 6) Weathering and Figure Painting, and 7) Displaying and Caring for your models.

The illustrations are another point of difference that this book possesses. Sure, there are a number of photos of finished models, but there are also lots of photos of models under construction, and many drawings that show building and painting sequences. There are also photos of products and both store bought and hand-made tools. I've never seen so many photos of boxes, tubes and cans of glues, putties, paints and other materials in one place before. It sure makes it easier to remember, seek and find these various helpful products when you know what they look like!

Listen, this book is great, so go out and get a copy. I guarantee that you'll find at least seventy-five new ideas in it. Come on, it only costs \$3.95—you probably paid at least that much for the last kit you bought.

Andrew P. Yanchus

**FAMOUS SPACESHIPS OF FACT AND FANTASY.** Edited by Harold A. Edmonson, Kalmbach Publishing Co., 88 pages, color and black & white photos, \$8.50.

As its title states, this book is devoted to real and imaginary spaceships. The factual craft include the Saturn V, Apollo, and the 747/Shuttle Orbiter combination. Craft from *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *2001*, *Space: 1999*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and the original *Buck Rogers* comic strip make up the imaginative part. This book covers these ships with color and black & white photos, 3 and 4 view drawings, lots of facts, and tips on how to build the plastic kits available.

But this book is more than a guide to building kits. Historical facts and data are given on the real spaceships and, although this information is available in many other books, it's nice to have it all together in one volume.

Andrew P. Yanchus

## How to build DIORAMAS

BY SHEPERD PAINE

FORHOOD, CUTTING  
TOOLS, WORKBENCH,  
DIORAMA PLANS,  
CONVERTING,  
PAINTING,  
DISPLAYING,  
CARING



**HOW TO BUILD DIORAMAS.** By Sheperd Paine, Kalmbach Publishing Co., 1027 North Seventh St., Milwaukee, WI 53233

Sheperd Paine is indubitably the finest modeler in this country today and it has been with bated breath that the modeling fraternity has awaited the publishing of this book. One of the facets to which he firmly adheres is an absolute lack of secrecy about any of the methods which he has learned over the years. This volume is an outstanding tribute to this belief. Of all the many books published on this subject, including my own, I can say without reservation that you might as well throw all the others away and stick to this one. It is, in my opinion, absolutely sensational!

Although it is assumed that the reader is already into the painting of figures, Sheperd does not exclude his own techniques which, in and of themselves, are entirely worth the price of the book. From the composing and pre-planning of a diorama, be it open or boxed, down to the minutest detailing and placement of figures, ground work, careful propping, self contained lighting and dramatic effects there is absolutely nothing omitted. Even his sources of supply are included. This is such a bible of modeling facts that I can barely understand how I ever accomplished anything without it. It really makes very little difference whether you are a military, fantasy, aircraft, ship, tank or even a doll house modeler there is something for all of you and you will emerge from the reading of this book with a far greater knowledge on procedure and execution of any project you choose to undertake.

Congratulations, Sheperd, on this supreme book and congratulations as well to Kalmbach for having the splendid vision in producing it along with all your other helpful publications.

Philip O. Stearns □

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GODZILLA

# • . . AND THEY GLOW IN THE DARK

## A History of Plastic Monster Hobby Kits

By ANDREW P. YANCHUS

**I**t was a dark and stormy night—but I hardly noticed the rain as I stood on the corner of Hempstead Turnpike and Cherry Valley Road waiting for my bus. It had been a long, but rewarding day. Weeks of planning and preparation by the Research & Development staff resulted in a presentation that convinced Aurora's management team to go ahead with a new series of monster kits. Aboard the Jamaicabound bus, I could only think of the new kits I would help develop over the next several months. Seen through rain-spattered windows, the changing pattern of lights reflected in the wet asphalt provided a perfect abstract frame for my thoughts.

Aurora had produced the first monster hobby kit eight years earlier, and many others had followed. Some mistakes had been made, but much had been learned over the years. Now Aurora was going to start over again. Eight years of experience would go into this new series, and I was there to help lay the groundwork. Visions of multipose figures, glistening lab equipment, and moldy dungeons filled my mind that rainy night. I should have at least considered that the rain might be a bad omen. But, back then in 1970, I couldn't imagine that Aurora, with all its expertise in the field of styrene horror, could err so badly and produce the most controversial hobby kits ever made.

It all started early in 1962 when Aurora unleashed the first movie monster hobby kit on the world. Kids everywhere, however, had dreamed of the monster kit concept much earlier than that. Two events fostered those dreams. First, Aurora broke away from the traditional modeling subjects of aircraft, ships and cars, and introduced the first plastic figure kits, some knights in armor, in the mid 50's. Shortly thereafter, in 1957, Universal Pictures released more than fifty of its classic horror movies to television. Dracula, the Wolf Man, and Frankenstein's monster came into America's living rooms and thrilled a new generation of monster fans. It wasn't hard for

young imaginations to envision the old monsters in the new modeling format. It just took Aurora a little time to realize what the public wanted, and then a little more time to make sure that it was safe to deliver it. Aurora researched the concept thoroughly, and when the series was announced to the toy and hobby trade, their findings were included.

"Aurora has carefully researched this product from every point of view, from saleability to psychological impact. In the opinion of reputable authorities, movie monsters actually perform a valuable service for the child. Certain

fantasies are harmful only if improperly focused. When they center about an imaginary object, like a picture, a movie, or a model, they are released in the manner of steam escaping through a safety valve on a radiator. In essence, they are reduced in value and content to the level of play, and, as such, become innocuous. Young people who permit their fears and hostilities this kind of outlet are really far healthier emotionally than those who can only seek gratification in terms of anti-social behaviour in the real world."

Kit manufacturers always approach

**Aurora's Godzilla (left) was the only monster kit to be reissued after Monogram acquired all of the molds for the Aurora kits. It lasted only a couple of years in the Monogram line and was recently discontinued. Right, Frankenstein's Monster carries off a victim figure, which was one of Aurora's mistakes. These were beautifully executed, snap-together figures. This particular model of the The Monster has been modified to match its appearance in the film Son of Frankenstein. The fur vest was built up from body putty with all the texture carved in hand.**



PHOTO PHILIP STEARNS

a new idea with caution. Tooling costs are so high that it could be years after a new kit is introduced before a profit is realized. To be a success, a kit has to be a good, steady seller for years, or be an overnight smash sensation. Therefore, Aurora backed its bold new concept every way it could. They went to Universal Pictures and paid for the rights to reproduce the classic monsters. They hired noted illustrator James Bama to paint the package art. They advertised the kits heavily. But they were still wary. Although Aurora promised a series of six different kits, only the first, the Frankenstein monster, was ready for production. Dracula, the Wolf Man, the Mummy, and the others would wait until the public's reaction to the series and the sales of the Frankenstein kit were known.

They didn't have to wait long. Frankenstein was a tremendous hit. Dracula and the Wolf Man were rushed into development, and were made available before the end of 1962. The Mummy and The Creature From The Black Lagoon followed six months later. The monster kits proved to be so popular that the molds used to produce the plastic parts had to be duplicated to keep production up to the world-wide demands.

#### MONSTER MADNESS

Aurora really started something. Of course, the monster movies had been popular for years before the kits appeared, and a number of magazines devoted to the old films were available. But it seems that it took Aurora to prove that the public's love of the horrible, the creepy, and the weird could support merchandising. It wasn't long before products such as monster jigsaw puzzles, pencil sharpeners, and bubble bath grew in numbers, and brought millions of dollars in sales to their manufacturers.

One of the first items directly inspired by the Aurora kits was a set of six, one-piece polyethylene figures of the Universal monsters. These were produced in 1963 by the Marx toy company, who used the same toolmaker who built the molds for the Aurora kits! They were great models.

By 1964, monster madness was sweeping the country. Magazines, comic books, movies and television gave the public creatures to scream at and monsters to laugh at. Aurora expanded its monster line by adding accessory kits filled with bats, rats and other frightful things, and by going outside the realm of Universal pictures for their subject matter. This was the year that kits of King Kong and Godzilla were introduced. Also new was a plastic guillotine, the first in a proposed series of Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horror kits. The kit, complete with victim



Fine chain was used to add realism to this Aurora kit of The Hunchback.

who lost his head, invoked some mild criticism, and other projects in a similar vein were shelved. Other kit manufacturers were getting into the monster scene, but chose to go the safer humorous route with cartoon monsters called Finks, Weird-Ohs, and Loonies that drove outrageous automobiles.

The "Big Event" of 1964 was the Monster Customizing Contest co-sponsored by Aurora, Universal and *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine. Contestants started with an Aurora movie monster kit, and then modified it, added extra details, or combined it with other kits and formed large scenes. Prizes of kits and magazine subscriptions were awarded, and the grand prize winner was flown to Hollywood for a tour of the Universal studios. To top it all off, the highest ranking models were pictured in the March 1965 issue of *Famous Monsters*.

It was amazing how many young model builders re-created typical scenes from the horror films. Graveyards, dungeons, and especially laboratories were common entries, and future Aurora kits would reflect the scene idea.

Aurora reached its first peak in 1965. New kits were still being added to the

line, and The Bride of Frankenstein and The Witch already showed the influence of the contest results. Up to this time, all the Aurora monsters, with the exceptions of King Kong and Godzilla, were made to a common scale, approximately 1/8th actual size. The bases included some scenic props—a tombstone, rocks, tree stumps, etc.—but these had been kept to a minimum, and were secondary to the figure itself.

With the two ghastly female kits, Aurora started creating complete scenes, and started to reduce the size of the figures to allow for the additional accessories. The Bride was strapped to a table placed next to a wall full of lab equipment, and The Witch hovered over a big black pot that hung from a chain suspended from a beam protruding from a section of wall. The scenic concept carried through to other types of figures in the Aurora line (sports, military, comic book heroes), but unfortunately, no new, common scale was chosen. Each scene determined the size of the figures, and each new one seemed to be different. Cross-kitting of parts and figures to create other scenes became impossible.

By the time I arrived at Aurora, late in 1965, all the classic Universal monsters

had been done, the Japanese monster genre had been touched, the funny TV monsters—*The Munsters* and *The Adams Family*—had been kitted, and an original creation, The Witch, had been made. Things were slowing down and over the next five years only one totally new monster kit was added to the line, while several older ones were dropped.

The one new kit was another sole entry into a proposed series that never developed further. It was The Forgotten Prisoner of Castelmore, a partially clothed skeleton chained to a dungeon wall. The kit was designed by the people at *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine. The kit did well, but the timing was off. By late '66, the first monster craze had wound down and Aurora started trimming the line, rather than adding to it.

#### THE OTHER GUYS

What is surprising about the first six years of Aurora monster kit production was the almost total lack of direct competition from other kit manufacturers. The other companies seemed contented in making funny, hot rod driving monstrosities. (Aurora did some of those types, too.)

Lindberg was one company involved in funny monster kits, but one series of four models that they made almost crossed the line into the serious area. I say "almost" because I've never been sure which way Lindberg intended these bizarre models to go. They had names such as Mad Mangler and Creeping Crusher, which suggested the serious, but the proportions and detailing of the models were somewhat unrealistic. In any case, these simple models never attracted much attention.

Multiple Toymakers did a series of miniature torture devices in 1965. These combined the reputation of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not!*, the horrors of torture, and the comedy of funny victims and executioners spouting jokes (cardboard word balloons held in plastic frames). It was a strange combination, and the kits didn't last long.

Comparable to Aurora's Godzilla were two kits released by UPC in 1967. Pagos and Pegila were giant Japanese monsters featured in the *Ultra Man* TV series being syndicated in the United States at that time. The kits, like the TV series, originated in Japan, and UPC was handling their manufacture and distribution in the states. The Japanese have produced many kits of their own TV and movie monsters, but Pagos and Pegila were the only two sold in the U.S.

#### FRIGHTENING LIGHTNING STRIKES!

After a few years of declining sales, Aurora decided to inject some new life into the monster line. The shot in the



PHOTO: PHILIP STEARNS

A "campus cutie" by Marx falls victim to Multiple's Iron Maiden.

arm was glow in the dark plastic.

Phosphorescent plastic had been around for years, but its previous hobby kit applications had been few. Renwal, who pioneered the field of science and anatomy kits with their Visible Man, probably produced the first glow in the dark kit in 1961 when they issued the Visible Man's skeleton as a separate kit. The problem with the gleaming material was not the radiation that so many parents feared, but was its extremely high cost. When Aurora decided to go glow, it was impractical to mold the existing kits entirely in the special plastic. Instead, only features such as heads and hands,

and small accessories such as bats and skulls, were molded in the glow material, and these were additions to the regular parts which remained intact. In other words, all the parts that glowed were also supplied in the regular colored plastic. The buyer was actually given a choice of regular and glow parts, and could use the extras for other models and conversions.

The idea worked. The first six movie monsters with "Ghoulish Glow Power" sold so well in 1969 that six more were added the next year. Those twelve monster kits continued to be the backbone of the Aurora monster line until 1975, and the glow-in-the-dark feature would be a common addition to many future kits. It was a simple gimmick that boosted sales and didn't offend even the most serious builders who could simply paint over any unwanted radiance.

The 70's saw the beginnings of another monster craze, and this time Aurora had some real competition. *Dark Shadows*, a daytime TV gothic soap opera, was causing a lot of excitement, but we at Aurora somehow missed its significance, and it was MPC that secured hobby kit rights to the show. Their kits of the show's stars, the vampire, Barnabas Collins, and the Werewolf, closely followed the pattern set by the Aurora kits. They were the same 1/8 scale, came with a few glow in the dark parts that duplicated regular parts, stressed the figure, and kept the base to a minimum. The one point of difference was the soft, bendable arms that could be set in different positions. This feature didn't work well, and fortunately, it never appeared in any other kits.



PHOTO: MPC FUNDIMENSIONS

The Walt Disney Haunted Mansion series included this vampire.



**Scenes of total destruction were provided by MPC in their Gigantics series.**

#### THE MINI-MONSTERS

Things were happening at Aurora. Top management had changed, and the new man in control wanted some kit ideas that would get Aurora noticed and increase its share of the kit market. Many ideas were suggested, but Monster Scenes was the concept that got picked. Only back then, during that bus ride home in the rain, the new series was called Mini-Monsters, a name that had to be scrapped because of legal reasons.

The complete story of the Monster Scenes is a long and complicated one. It can't be told in the confines of this history of monster kits. Monster Scenes deserves its own article, and we will present just that in a future issue. Meanwhile, here is a condensed view of what happened.

The ideas that made up the Monster Scenes concept came from various sources. Different proposals were combined with old observations, and the result was a series of snap-together, constant scale kits that could be combined in numerous ways and allow the builder to re-create any type of scene from his favorite horror films. The

figure kits covered the traditional cast of characters. There were the monsters, both old and new, the heroine/victim, and the ever-present mad scientist. Other kits provided all the standard sets and props—laboratory, skeleton, dungeon, torture devices, etc. In an effort to improve quality, test tubes, beakers and other lab parts were molded in clear plastic, something that had never been done in the old kits. For greater flexibility in creating scenes, all the figures came with extra arms and legs and could be posed in different ways. For even more variations, limbs were purposely designed to be interchangeable between kits. For example, Dracula's legs could be snapped onto Dr. Jekyll's body! Even the popular glow in the dark feature was present in certain kits. Monster Scenes had everything! How could we go wrong?

Well, there were about as many answers to that question as there were Aurora employees in 1971. Undoubtedly, there were too many people involved in the project. There were too many different ideas of what the kits should be and how they should be

marketed. Somewhere along the line, the original concept of re-creating favorite movie scenes was lost, and the "Rated X For Excitement" tone was over-emphasized. The kids may have loved us, but parents were outraged, and the press condemned us. They blasted Aurora for selling sex (Vampirella's clothing has to be painted on!), sadism (The pincers are used to rip the fingernails out of little babies!), and violence (The guillotine cuts the victim in half!) to five-year-olds. None of it was a true picture of our intent. But, buckling under pressure, Nabisco, new owner of Aurora, took its only direct step into Aurora policy, and ordered the immediate halt of Monster Scenes production.

Three new kits were stopped in their first production run and, as a result, were never released in the United States. Inventories of parts for these and the earlier kits were shipped to Canada and sold there. Monster Scenes was dead the same year it was begun.

#### TIP-TOEING OVER BROKEN STYRENE

The twelve regular glow monster kits

continued to be produced after the Monster Scenes disaster, but Aurora maintained a low profile in horror subjects for the next several years. This allowed other companies, especially MPC, to get into Aurora's domain.

MPC knew that the stigma left by Monster Scenes would throw a critical eye on any other monster kits that came along. New kits would have to be exciting to kids, yet had to meet with parental approval. In 1973, MPC came up with a good solution in their Pirates Of The Caribbean series, which was based on the Disneyland park attraction. What parent could criticize any product that carried the name Walt Disney?

Only a couple of "live" pirates found their way into this series. For the most part, the kits depicted skeletons in tattered pirate outfits. They fought alligators, octopi and each other through a series of springs, rubber bands, and concealed switches billed as "Zap/Action."

The seven Disney Pirate kits were successful enough to warrant four more "Zap/Action" Disney kits the next year. This time the Haunted Man-

sion provided the theme, and vampires, mummies, grave robbers and ghosts were the subjects.

In quick succession, MPC followed these with other series of monster oriented kits. The Strange Change kits each featured a container that had changeable contents. One was a casket. When the lid was first opened, a full bodied vampire was seen. Then the lid was closed, and after re-opening, the vampire was nothing more than bones.

Next were The Gigantics, huge insects set into scenes of mass destruction. The colossal bugs demolished buildings, while tiny plastic people fled in terror, and cardboard backdrops went up in simulated flames.

Then came the Haunted Glo-Heads, MPC's most original monster idea. These kits were little more than large size heads of the favorite monster types, but the large size allowed for detail impossible to achieve in smaller scale models. It was a great idea, but like all their previous gimmick-laden series, MPC's Haunted Glo-Heads had a short production life. While some of Aurora's original monster kits lasted for fourteen years in regular and glow

versions, none of the MPC monster kits survived more than three years.

## REBIRTH

The longevity of the original Aurora monsters eventually lead to their demise. More than a decade of continuous use took its toll on the molds used to form the plastic parts. They simply wore out. It was getting to the point where the molds were down for repairs almost as long as they were producing kits. Manufacturing and material costs had also increased since the kits were first introduced, and the kit prices were rising at an alarming rate. There was concern that we would price ourselves beyond the reach of most of our customers. Building new tooling to duplicate the original kits wouldn't bring the retail price down, so it was decided that a smaller, simpler series of monster kits would replace the original items.

Once again I would be helping create a new line of monster kits, but this time it wouldn't be 100% new. We had to use as much of the old Monster Scenes tooling as possible.

Playing it perfectly safe, we decided

**While Aurora produced kits of the Universal movie monsters, Marx did these soft one-piece plastic versions.**





**"Zap/Action" moving parts were incorporated into these Disney kits by MPC.**



to eliminate any trace of sex, sadism and gore. We went back to the tried and true approach of a basic monster standing on a minimal bit of scenic base. And so there wouldn't be any doubt as to the origin of the subject matter, the series was boldly labeled Monsters Of The Movies. We even included a miniature clack board in each kit to serve as a name plate.

Three of the new kits—Dracula, Dr. Jekyll, and Mr. Hyde—came from the

Monster Scenes. Some of the original parts were eliminated, and others were added. Jekyll and Hyde, previously sold in one kit, were split into two.

The Wolf Man had never been done in the Monster Scenes series, but a pattern had been created for a follow-up series that never got into production. I was glad to get this model back in the works because the old Wolf Man kit was the poorest of the original group. The old kit didn't capture the look of the Lon-

Chaney, Jr. Wolf Man; the new model did.

The Monster Scenes Frankenstein, originally designed to work with other figures in scenes, proved to be too static to stand on its own, and we decided to completely re-do this kit. As Project Manager, I now had more control over the final look of the new kits, and I called in comic book artist and monster fan Dave Cockrum to design Frankenstein's creation. Dave's dynamic sense of action added a lot of life to the Aurora kit line. Besides the Frankenstein Monster, he drew up the new Creature From The Black Lagoon, Rodan, Ghidrah, the huge Tyrannosaurus Rex, and many other kits that, unfortunately, never saw the light of day.

Monsters Of The Movies were introduced in 1975, another peak time for monsters. There were more monster kits available that year than ever before or since. Aurora overlapped the end of the glow monsters and the start of their replacements, so twenty kits were on sale at the same time. Most of the MPC kits were still available, and Addar came up with a Spirit In A Bottle.

But the cycle was once again coming to an end. Science fiction was starting to push horror monsters out of the public's imagination and the kit manufacturers' catalogs. Aurora was having some financial and management problems, and money for new tooling disappeared. I had foreseen some of the troubles, and left the company after the development work on Monsters Of The Movies had been completed. In 1977, Aurora was sold, and the kit line was dissolved. The molds for the monsters and all the other Aurora hobby kits went to another giant in the hobby industry, Monogram.

Since Aurora came to its end, only a few monster kits have been produced. Mego did a new King Kong, complete with Twin Towers. AMT tried to capture the Bigfoot crowd with a snap-together, glow-in-the-dark kit in '78. Monogram reissued many Aurora kits, but only one of the monsters, Godzilla, and that reissue has already been discontinued. The last creature to be made in plastic kit form was The Alien, a horror monster in a science fiction setting. That kit was by MPC and it, too, has already been discontinued.

Is this the end of monster kits? No, I don't think so. Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, the Wolf Man, and the others will always spark our imaginations. Right now they may be resting, pushed aside by X-Wing Fighters, Snow Walkers, and a short Jedi Master. But they'll break through again, and when they do, the kit manufacturers will be there with boxes of unassembled styrene parts ready to be snapped together. And they'll probably glow in the dark. △

# MONSTER KIT CHECKLIST

The following list is a compilation of all the monster kits that have been produced in the United States. Since the word "monster" covers such a wide range of subjects, not every "monster" kit could be included in this checklist. For the most part, the kits listed here are of serious subjects, or are serious depictions of humorous or semi-humorous prototypes (The Munsters, Disney items). Totally humorous caricatures and cartoons, such as monsters driving hot rods, are not included. (We could cover these in the future, if there is enough interest.) Some science fiction monsters have been excluded because they were covered in detail in the "SF Model Checklist" that appeared in STARLOG

No. 21 (April 1979). Separate kits of torture devices, lab equipment, and accessories are included because most of these were designed to be used with the basic figure kits.

The list is divided by the kit manufacturers, and contains the following information:

**KIT NUMBER**—This is the stock ordering number. Reissues of a kit often receive different numbers, and some numbers are reassigned to new kits after the originals have been discontinued. All this results in some kits having more than one number, and sometimes the same number appearing on two or more different kits.

**KIT NAME**—This is the name of the item as it appears on the package. Note

that this may not always be an accurate or complete description of the subject.

**SCALE**—This is the fractional relationship of the model to the real thing. Most scales on this list should be considered as approximations.

**YEARS**—This is the production life of the kit. These are the dates that the kit was introduced and discontinued. This information is based on recorded purchase dates, copyrights, and catalog appearances.

Unfortunately, most of the kits listed here have been out of production for several years, and are no longer generally available. The kit manufacturers do not maintain stocks of discontinued items, so do not try to obtain old kits from them. Old kits can sometimes be found in small toy or variety stores, and at flea markets. Collectors can be reached through want ads placed in many of the current modeling magazines.

One publication that specializes in the buying, selling and trading of old kits is the Kit Collector's Clearinghouse. It is available from John W. Burns, 3214 Hardy Drive, Edmond, Oklahoma 73034. Cost is \$6.00 for six bi-monthly issues.

Kit #	Kit Name	Scale	Years	Remarks
<b>ADDAR</b>				
227	Spirit In A Bottle	1/20	75 - 76	Graveyard scene in a bottle; snap-together; glow. Also sold in England by Impulse.
<b>AMT</b>				
7701	Bigfoot	1/7	78 - 78	Snap-together; glow.
<b>AURORA</b>				
The Original Series:				
422	The Forgotten Prisoner of Castelmare	1/8	66 - 68	Skeleton chained to wall; origin story in <i>Creepy</i> #34, August 1970.
423	Frankenstein	1/8	62 - 68	Walking over grave.
424	Dracula	1/8	62 - 68	In the woods.
425	The Wolfman	1/8	62 - 68	Standing on rocks.
426	The Creature	1/8	63 - 68	The Creature from the Black Lagoon, standing on rocks.
427	The Mummy	1/8	63 - 68	Walking through ruins.
428	The Phantom of the Opera	1/8	64 - 68	The mask removed.
460	Dr. Jekyll as Mr. Hyde	1/8	65 - 68	The instant of transformation.
461	The Hunchback of Notre Dame	1/8	64 - 68	Two different boxes: original depicted Anthony Quinn version.
463	Customizing Monster Kit Series 1	1/8	64 - 64	Assortment of rats, bats, bones, tomb stones, spiders, etc.
464	Customizing Monster Kit Series 2	1/8	64 - 64	Vulture, mad dog, skull, bats, rats.
468	King Kong	1/25	64 - 68	Jungle scene.
469	Godzilla	1/25	64 - 68	Trampling buildings.
482	The Bride of Frankenstein	1/10.5	65 - 67	On lab table.
483	The Witch	1/12	65 - 67	Mixing up a cauldron of potion.
800	The Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors Guillotine	1/15	64 - 68	With victim that loses his head.
804	The Munsters	1/16	65 - 65	Herman, Lily, Grandpa and Eddie in a living room scene.
805	The Addams Family Haunted House	1/64	65 - 66	Addams Family represented as paper cut-outs in the windows.
Glow-In-The-Dark Series: These twelve kits are reissues of the original series kits with additional glow-in-the-dark parts. The first six kits were issued in two different boxes: the first boxes were the traditional long rectangles, while the second boxes were square. The second group of six kits were only available in the square boxes. Canadian versions of the first six also appeared in wider versions of the rectangle.				
449	Frankenstein	1/8	69 - 75	
450	The Wolfman	1/8	69 - 75	
451	The Phantom of the Opera	1/8	69 - 75	
452	The Mummy	1/8	69 - 75	
453	The Forgotten Prisoner of Castelmare	1/8	69 - 75	
454	Dracula	1/8	69 - 75	
465	King Kong	1/25	70 - 75	
466	Godzilla		70 - 75	
470	The Witch	1/12	70 - 75	
481	The Hunchback of Notre Dame	1/8	70 - 75	
482	Dr. Jekyll as Mr. Hyde	1/8	70 - 75	
483	The Creature	1/8	70 - 75	
Monster Scenes Series: All the kits were snap-together. Figures came with extra sets of movable limbs for a variety of poses. The last three kits were not released in the United States, but were sold in Canada.				
631	Dr. Deadly	1/13	71 - 71	Three sets of arms
632	The Victim	1/13	71 - 71	Two sets of arms and legs.
633	Frankenstein	1/13	71 - 71	Two sets of arms and legs; all parts glow.
634	Gruesome Goodies	1/13	71 - 71	Generator, tables, test tubes, sabre-tooth rabbit.
635	The Pain Parlor	1/13	71 - 71	Operating table, control panel, glow skeleton.
636	The Pendulum	1/13	71 - 71	

(continued on page 46)



# THE AGE OF CONAN

A military intelligence report on the Hyborian Age.

By RICHARD K. REIHN

**B**eginning life about half a century ago, Conan was a late bloomer by comparison to his illustrious contemporaries, Tarzan and John Carter of Mars. After whiling away most of his early life in the pulp magazines, he is only now emerging to follow Tarzan's footsteps into the movies. And, at this point, there is no telling where this may lead. Perhaps, fifty years from now, a contestant on a quiz show will be asked, "Name at least three actors who have played the role of Conan." Who knows? One thing, however, is certain: were he around today, Robert E. Howard, who took his own life in 1936, would be more surprised than anyone else over the attention Conan, his creation, has been gathering over the years.

Howard was a prolific writer and a natural storyteller. But Conan was merely one of several characters who populated his fantasies. Indeed, when one compares the amount of paper which currently bears the name of Conan on the title page, the original legacy, of which we may catch a glimpse in the Ace Science Fiction Series, is rather slim.

Unfortunately, Conan and the Hyborian Age came along rather late in Howard's life. And even though his stories were received with interest and began to gather a following while he was still alive, he had no way of knowing that his creation would one day threaten to become a cult in the world of fantasy fiction.

As is so often the case when an idea assumes a life of its own, those who carried on with Howard's legacy—and lately, one needs a score card to keep track of them—gave the central character dimensions which were lacking in the original. Probably the most important think-piece Robert E. Howard did on behalf of Conan was to conceive the Hyborian Age. Having done this much, he now had the background tapestry into which the activities of his character could be woven with a minimum of fuss. It became a light exercise for the writer, whose storytelling ability also made it a light exercise for the reader. It was like doing several years' homework in advance. Howard himself

made no bones about why he made his hero out to be a simpleton who would simply use his will, passion and almost superhuman brawn to fight his way out of a tight spot without straining whatever cerebral capacity he might have had. It made for a writer's life uncomplicated by the need to dream up ingenious plots and schemes. And, in this, Howard was very much a product of his times. If one ever attempted to find a "superficial" society, then the United States of the 1930's would represent a powerful candidacy. Just catch one of



To the left is Cliff Sanderson's 80mm interpretation of the classic barbarian in full combat. Above is Conan—alias Arnold Schwarzenegger.

the old pigskin epics on the Late Show. They leave us with the feeling that one went to college to have fun, belong to the right fraternity, wear a racoon coat and answer every problem with a punch in the nose (try some of "Doc" Smith's characters for the last one). The letterman is the hero and the valedictorian is usually a chump who may be called upon to perform some unusual feat so that he may breathe the same air with the hero.

Conan, then, is the true barbarian. That is to say, that he conforms to the image the Romans gave us of all those who stood beyond the pale of the *pax Romana*. All that is native and inborn, speed, strength, stamina, is celebrated while all that which is acquired, learning, manners and all the other general vestiges of refinement, are viewed with suspicion and characterized as effete, glib and sly. Truly a dropout's delight.

Still, Conan has assumed dimensions which are bursting the limits Howard set for him in the episodic world of the short story. And, even though bravely attempted by those who carried on with Howard's legacy, they have never really succeeded because they are constantly trying to catch up with the legend and because Howard himself has left them with so many inconsistencies.

By way of an example, I found myself laughing out loudly at 3 AM while trying to read myself to sleep on Volume Two (*Conan of Cimmeria*) of the Ace Series. There, between each of the short stories, a capsule caption has been inserted which attempts to create some sort of continuity out of the original non-sequitur hodge podge. And in the caption preceding "The Vale of Lost Women," it said: "...he has fought and *intrigued* his way..." Intrigued? Indeed! There is very little evidence that Conan could do much more than growl or utter an occasional short—very short—sentence.

These same captions also inform us of the progress of Conan's career as a professional soldier. Between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-four, to cite an example, we are told that Conan has been a condottiere in the service of Nemedia, Ophir and Argos. This raises the ugly suspicion that Conan is far more of a professional deserter than a professional soldier, unless the Hyborian kingdoms fight very very small and short wars. But this would argue against the need to hire mercenaries, wouldn't it?

Yet, Conan goes on to become far more than a mere *beau sabreur*. He even manages to get himself promoted to the rank of king. That's heavy stuff. Here, the simpleton Howard created comes into conflict with the life the character assumes. A simpleton can certainly become a professional soldier

and he can certainly sit upon a throne. Actual history of our own world furnishes ample evidence of that. But simpletons don't rise very far from the ranks and they must come a long way from there if they are to mount a throne that was not given as a birthright.

But rise from the ranks Conan does and he gains a throne for himself as well. And this means simply that the character got the best of his creators. Unfortunately, this growth takes place "off screen," to borrow a premise from the movie makers. Conan pops out in one episode after another, experiencing all those adventures while the important events in his life that go into the shaping of the man take place elsewhere. And no one is more keenly aware of this void than the wargamer or anyone with more than a passing interest in military history.

The Hyborian Age reverberates again and again to the clash of arms. But we get to see precious little of it, because such matters were either quite beyond the ken of Howard and his successors or none were prepared to do the homework to fill in the details of the tapestry that is the Hyborian Age.

Thus, while it is quite an open secret that Conan stories furnish dandy plots for DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS scenarios, which are such a favorite with the younger set these days, matters are quite different when it comes to the matter of creating scenarios for a wargame. And the Hyborian Age knew war. There is no doubt whatever.

Taking the imagery of Howard and his successors at face value, what we get is a fuzzy and indistinct view. Unlike, for example, in the Gor stories, only Conan seems to be in clear focus. And whenever the background does emerge, however briefly, the view of Hyborian military institutions seems to be uncomplimentary.

By way of an example, one may deduct from "The Hall of the Dead," that the armed forces of Zamora were hardly worth their weight in refuse. Captain Nestor is forced to enter the story with a band of five soldiers—all that could be found in the barracks. And this in the proximity of the royal residence! Nor has he any confidence in the five he has. But why should he, when one considers that an entire company of them was lost to a slug in the ancient city of Larsha, a frightful animal Conan kills simply by dropping a piece of sculpture on it!

Since Zamora was not summarily swallowed by its neighbors and made to pay tribute, we must assume that, perhaps, there was more there than meets the eye.

In other stories, horsemen appear which display a vague kinship to the nomad horsemen of Asia. But we had better rule out the Mongols. Were Con-

an to meet them *a outrance*, he might very well go down in defeat, because these stalwart fighters who drew one hundred and fifty pound bows knew nothing of the nicety of heroes, cults and legends. Surely, if Samuel Colt's sixgun was the great equalizer of the American West then the laminate recurve bow of the Asiatic nomads fulfilled a similar function during the centuries preceding the invention of gunpowder.

To come to grips with the military institutions of the Hyborian Age, we must go back to the source and find the well from which Robert E. Howard drew the inspirations for his Conan stories. And here, the map of the Hyborian Age, the names of the kingdoms as well as the names of some of the characters offer some solid clues.

Take Vanaheim and Asgard, the lands of the Vanir and Aesir, Ymir, whose daughter Atali we meet in "The Frost Giant's Daughter," they all come straight out of Norse mythology. Similarly did Greco-Roman mythology and classics like the Tales of the Arabian Nights furnish endless fuel and plots to Howard's stories.

As I mentioned above, it was the device by which all this material from such a diversity of sources might be brought into play, that was Howard's most important think-piece of the Conan stories: the Hyborian Age.

Having accepted his basic premise and backing away sufficiently to take stock of the Hyborian civilization, we find ourselves with a situation where just about anything of the pre-gunpowder era goes. What Howard does give us, is the vision of a society where the military institutions of two millenia, more or less familiar to us, appear to co-exist side by side. And that poses a fascinating challenge for the would-be designer of scenarios for wargames set in the Hyborian Age.

In finding a parable in our own world upon which we might construct a model for Hyborian military institutions, the first thing that comes to mind is a similarly vaguely drawn era of the Western World, the times of the Merovingians and the early Karolingians. Spanning the centuries between the demise of the Roman empire and the rise of the Karolingian empire, we generally refer to them as the Dark Ages, because the flow of literary sources from that period is sparse, when compared to the written legacies of Rome and medieval Europe. Yet, it is precisely in this era, where Howard might have cast Conan who conforms so much to the image of those barbarians who dismembered the glory that was Rome—for Roman citizens, that is!

In order to construct a Hyborian model, let's take a brief look at Merovingian Gaul.



COURTESY ACE SCIENCE FICTION

#### **Maroto's interpretation of Conan.**

As the power of Rome waned during the fifth century AD, the erstwhile province of Gaul fell under the sway of several, more or less Romanized factions. The era of the Merovingians began when Clovis, the chieftain of a Frankish warband, gained sufficient support to seize control of Gaul. The precise date of the start of the Merovingian era is generally reckoned from the year 481 AD, when Clovis assumed his patrimony at Tournai, which probably included no more than a few hundred fighting men. This year, however, also marked the beginning of a struggle which did not really come to an end until the demise of the Merovingian dynasty and the rise of the Karolingians during the middle of the eighth century.

With this much for a general background, there is much about the microcosm of Gaul that reminds us of the Hyborian Age.

On the one hand, there are the cities which, monetized through their local trade monopolies, have the hard cash necessary to maintain garrison of professional soldiers, very much along the lines of Roman imperial institutions.

Then, there are the magnates, important land holders who, while rich in

land and its produce, are poor in cash. They generally maintained mounted retainers, the forerunners of the medieval knights, bachelors, unmarried young men who served against the provision of room and board and whatever loot occasional warfare might produce.

Next, there were smaller ethnic groupings, including old Roman military colonies, which had their own, more or less Romanized laws. The colonies, for example, might raise manpower more along the lines of republican Rome.

There were also the Burgundians, who had a standing army, very much along Roman lines.

Lastly, there were the Germanic tribal associations. And, for the period in question here, the Franks were their most important element. The Franks, who had settled in the Rhine-Main regions, known as Franconia, were actually an ethnic minority in Gaul. Their bulk sat in Germany and those Franks who were to play important roles in Merovingian affairs were actually the warbands, commanded by the *reguli*, which had, on occasion, served the empire as mercenaries. However, those who were settled further to the east and more accustomed to pushing the plow, could, from time to time, be called upon

to support the *pagi*, the fulltime fighting men of their counts. Not far different from the magnates of Gaul.

What becomes significant during the era of the Merovingians is that the migrations both within and beyond the borders of Rome are drawing to a conclusion while new power constellations arise. It is no longer the tribal migration of Visigoth, Ostrogoth, Vandal, or other tribes who shape the map of Europe. Instead, we witness the waxing andwaning power of great families or clans and their clients.

In a world, replete with matricide, patricide, fratricide, intrigue, treason and all the other so-called "Byzantine" crafts of state, Merovingian Gaul, still tribal Germanicum and what remained of the Roman empire, might have served admirably as a background for a Barbarian of Conan's stature. But it would have also limited Howard's style. Not only would have whatever smattering of reality his readers had cut across the imagery of the fantasy, there would have been little room left for the magic and sorcery we encounter so often in his stories. No. In view of the no-holds-barred situation offered by the Hyborian Age, it was best to leave the Merovingian dog lie. But, we need not do the same.

What served Howard's purpose in one direction, can serve us in the other. Enjoying the freedom of action Howard created for himself, we can do likewise. Going through the Conan stories, it becomes a simple matter of detecting Greek, Roman or Near Eastern patterns, of Asiatic nomads or Norse seafarers. It becomes equally simple to take stock of their military institutions. Kingdoms can federate or be made and broken. Strange alliances can generate even stranger bedfellows. How about pitting a Zulu impi against a cohort or two of Roman-style legionaries? Only in the Hyborian Age can a Djinghis Khan come thundering out of the reaches beyond Hyrkana and, perhaps, only in Hyborian times can he be defeated? The arguments over encounters of this nature can provide fuel for years of controversy where no one can ever be entirely right or wrong.

With the Hyborian Age, Howard provided the designers of adventure or wargames with a stage that is limited only by the absence of gunpowder. For those who have sufficient background to construct their own games and backgrounds, enough has already been said. If one would, however, like to have a more concrete starting base, the Merovingian and Karolingian eras and the image of the Western World as it presents itself during those times will serve effectively. All one need do is plug Hyborian names of places into the right places. The entire Hyborian business is, at once, that complex and simple.  $\Delta$

# FLEETS

At sea or in space, fleets are a wargamer's delight.

By RICHARD RIEHN

In the age of nuclear carriers, missile frigates and submarines, the battleship has become a museum piece—like the dinosaur, who saw himself ruled out of existence by an ever-changing ecology. That, however, was an evolutionary process which took millennia to go full cycle. The demise of the battleship came suddenly and with a great deal of fanfare, even if most people were so unaware of what was actually happening that the truth of the matter did not dawn upon them until some time after the events.

When submarines, dive bombers and torpedo planes wiped one Leviathan after another off the board during

World War II, they left battleship admirals and others in their wake. But, like the ships themselves, the former had outlived their purpose. With no new support for battleships coming from the ranks of the junior officers, battleship admirals eventually retired out of the service and became at first an endangered and then an extinct species. No more fierce struggles in the appropriations committees over how much money would go to the building of new carriers.

But the changeover didn't come easily. Pearl Harbor and the demise of Battleship Row was a shock. But several of those ships were recovered and over-

hauled until they were better than they had been before. Meanwhile, the other side was dealt some equally harsh and more lasting lessons. And over the strains of victory, it was that much harder to profit from the other side's lessons than it was from one's own. The idea of a ship having a range for its firepower limited only by the range of the aircraft it could launch had not yet taken root. Nor did anyone see the airplane as a mere ship's weapon. An airplane, after all, had a life quite of its own. Had not the operations against Crete proven to the British that seapower was no match for land-based airpower? Thus, the superiority of the carrier

Fighting Sail from Valiant.



over the conventional battlewagon was still shrouded in the smoke of the naval battles waged in the Pacific, when the Bismarck was introduced.

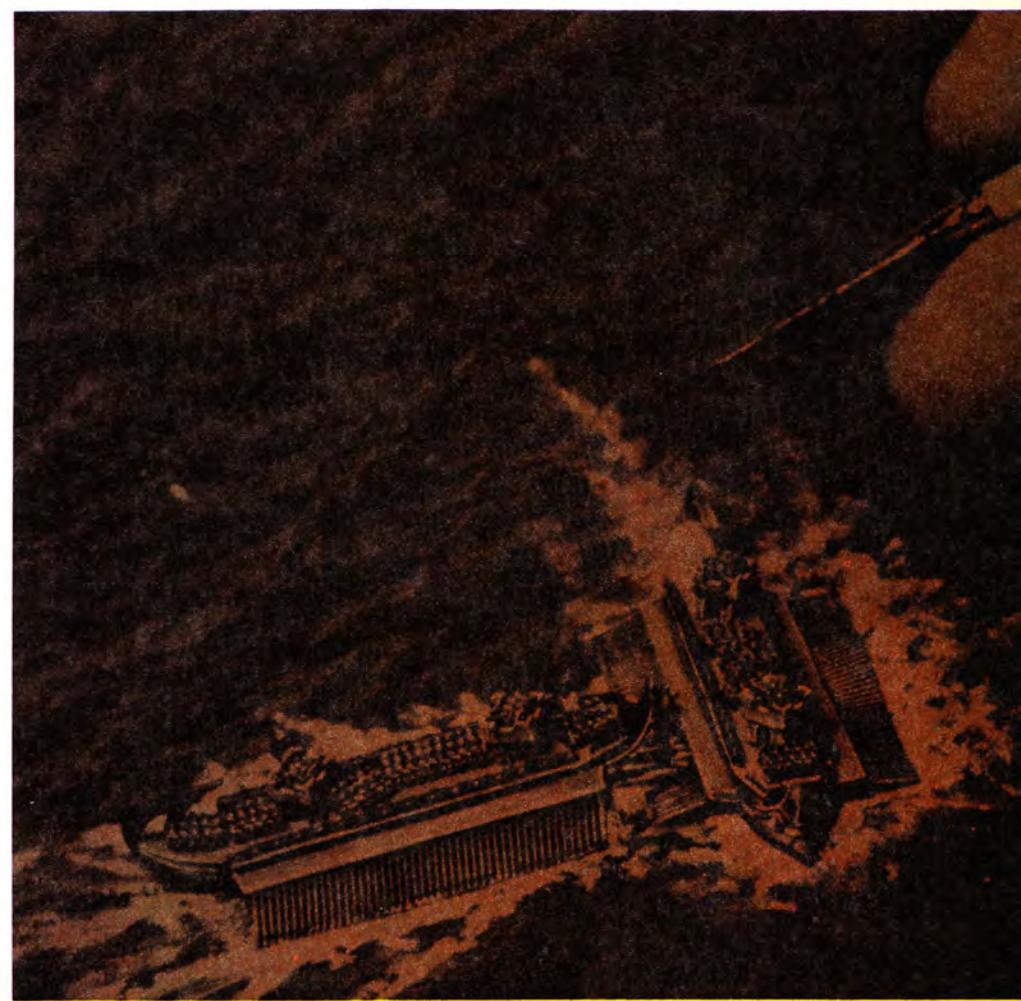
Radar gun laying equipment had made it possible for the Bismarck to demolish the Hood with gun fire over distances that could hardly be gauged by the naked eye. Dive bombers and torpedo planes have already made this kind of gunnery look like child's play. And, prophetically, it was to be a squadron of torpedo planes, already antiquated by the standards of the times, and not the guns of the British battle line which were to seal the doom of the mighty Bismarck. The public did not get to see this too clearly, because public relations presented the results differently. But the battle line, so long the measure of seapower, had already been laid to rest by the onrush of airpower.

And it was with the very recognition of airpower that a new idea took hold: a flying navy. It was a notion that would have been unthinkable just a few decades earlier. Yet, there it was. And, more significantly, it took away from the new service spawned by the flying machine—the air force—the very place it seemed to have earned for itself.

Looking to the stars, hardly anyone thinks in terms of aircraft flying from one airfield to another. Instead, we think of spaceships navigating between ports, floating in another sea where the planets have become the distant continents. And the naval units guarding these new space lanes with everything ranging from dreadnoughts to cruisers and destroyers bear more than passing resemblance to their erstwhile alter egos who still plow through the far more solid H<sub>2</sub>O on good old Mother Earth. It reminds one of sayings like: "Change is the only thing of permanence," or "The more things change, the more they remain the same." That is to say, "All things in life are relative and relativity remains in constant flux." A lot of words? Not at all. The unspoken complaint of the typical soldier is that even though he is being constantly apprised of new developments, he soon learns that, while the tools may change, the prin-



**Stardate: 3000 from Valiant.**



**Two ramming-speed galleys by Valiant Models in 1/1200 scale.**

ciples underlying their use generally do not.

Does only the admiral commanding a spacefleet from Stardate: 3000 (Valiant) or Starfleet Wars (Superior) face threats from all directions, i.e. above, below, from all sides? Certainly not. Our fleets today may be attacked

similarly. However, we use different means to deal with threats which come from above and below. In this respect, the Starfleet admiral leads a somewhat less complicated life.

And what of those days when iron men sailed wooden ships? What were the demands placed upon a Nelson?

The simplest answer to this is that they were different but certainly not less complicated.

For one thing, the eighteenth century Man-of-War sailing ships was entirely dependent upon the wind. If the wind did not blow, the most powerful battle fleet in the world would simply lie becalmed. When it did blow and the enemy was in sight, then it would form part and parcel of every tactical move to be made. And tactical moves at sea were far more complicated than on land.

The cannon, like its cousin the musket, was a smoothbore. As such, its range and accuracy left much to be desired. The guns were massed closely together for the maximum shotgun effect that became known as the broadside.

This ultimately gave rise to a class of ships known collectively as ships of the line. That is to say, ships which packed from thirty to fifty guns both in their port and starboard batteries. However, it was also learned that the margin of force a first rate of 100 or more guns might hold over a 72 was not nearly so great as the differences in the cost of acquisition and maintenance. This made the 72s the most important class of ships of the line.

Having created a large number of such gun platforms, the most effective way to bring their power to bear was to bring them together in a long keel line. Thus, as in the ancient rowing galley, the basic tactical system was quite analogous to that practiced on land. Linear tactics operated both on land and on sea.

For the wargamer, few eras can produce better war material for realistic game scenarios than the eighteenth century naval actions. Here, one need not be encumbered with the need to devise all sorts of ratios to bring the real thing down to proportions manageable on a game table. No need to let four, six or eight little men stand in for a battalion of six hundred. Not even Nelson's fleet at Trafalgar is so huge that it can not be reproduced, ship for ship, by a collector of moderate means.

And when it comes to the matter of attaching damages to our fleet units, ships are machines. The ring, looped over the tip of a mast, its color possibly determining how much of it has been lost, etc., requires far less of a stretch of imagination than figuring out how much a battalion which has lost twenty percent of its men is really worth.

A ship which loses a mast or more, will shear out of the line and may or may not be picked up afterward by the victorious side.

Indeed, with so much empathy for the machine we seem to have these days, it is surprising that we don't have more sea gaming, especially with the excellent products of outfits like Valiant

and GHQ in the traditional vein and Valiant and Superior in the space business.

The traditional shipmodel, for example, requires only moderate skills for assembly. As for the finishing, this is another matter. But here the question is one of purpose. To do the superjobs to be seen in the accompanying illustrations is really much more than what the gamer needs. The castings are so attractive that they can get by with a priming or the very simplest of painting.

Valiant, which offers an extensive line of conventional ships, of which many, especially the 1/1200 scale

units, may be readily adapted to sail off-planet seas, also has a futuristic line, Stardate: 3000. These units, for which movement stands are also available, bear strong resemblance to Buck Rogers coffee grinders seen during the days of Buster Crabbe's original stints in the series.

Since there is, at this writing, no known historical literature of space wars, from which game plans and scenarios might be abstracted, Battleline's ALPHA OMEGA boardgame, which has been adapted for use with Stardate: 3000, will furnish the beginner with an excellent starting point.

More about fleets to come. □

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIC GOLDBERG

Eric Goldberg, the master adventure games inventor, talks to our editor.

By MIKE KILBERT

**M**any people like to play what is called "adventure" games—anything from wargames to science-fiction boardgames to fantasy role-playing games. But how many people know what goes into the box that they've just bought. It certainly is a rare opportunity to be able to chat with someone like Eric Goldberg who has designed just about every type of game available.

Eric Goldberg's credentials are known throughout the in-

dustry through his long list of credits—from KURSK to JOHN CARTER OF MARS, from COMMANDO to DRAGONQUEST, and the list goes on. I think that you will find his comments both insightful and interesting.

His ideas will challenge you whether you are a player or possibly one of those people who hopes to design a game of his own one day. (Don't we all?) No matter where you fit in—Eric's comments are illuminating and appropriate.

**MK:** As the designer of Simulations Publication's DRAGONQUEST, are you happy with the way it was produced?

**EG:** Well, I'm not entirely happy, but then again no designer is once the game comes out. We always want things exactly right. Sometimes we'd even like to go back and make some changes in the whole system. But overall I am pretty impressed with the way it came out, especially since it was done over a concentrated period of six months.

**MK:** What would you have added to the game if you had the chance to make some changes?

**EG:** I had some religious and magic items systems that I wanted to include; they will be released as supplements. The problem was that the rules were way over-length. The rules ran about 150 pages, they were supposed to be six or seven pages.

I was disappointed with the cover.

**MK:** The cover of the box or the cover of the rules?

**EG:** The cover of the box. But Redmond Simonsen (Art Director of SPI) is probably a better judge of that than I am. I guess I could nitpick, but there are a lot of good things about the game. The illustrations came out very well. I think, overall, the rules presentation was the best ever done for a role-playing game. Role-playing games are chronically disorganized, so I'm pretty pleased with it.

**MK:** Getting back to the covers. I was disappointed with the covers of the rulesbooks. They seemed to lack the color, the flair, the flash that I think today's market requires.

**EG:** Initially I thought they were good. You're right they do lack the flash. I would have liked a full-color magazine-

type cover for each book but there were budgetary limits. SPI works out a price formula for each game based on the components that are included. The formula did not allow for the expense of that type of cover. So instead of a slick cover, there are more rules. I think that most gamers would prefer less expensive covers and more rules.

**MK:** When I first saw DRAGONQUEST, in playtest format, I went through the rules and it seemed to me that they were not fun. They were very straightforward. To me it really was a fantasy role-playing game done by a wargaming company. When I spoke to some people at SPI about it, they indicated that they wanted to break some new ground with this game. As the designer, what's your opinion?

**EG:** At SPI we agreed that the existing role-playing game rules were basically chaotic. And I felt that even if some people interpreted this disorganization as good, it was not the path that DRAGONQUEST would follow. I still insist that what any game needs is well-constructed, tight rules. DRAGONQUEST may not be the best set of rules ever written, but in comparison with other role-playing games on the market they are pretty good.

Also you should keep in mind that the section that you saw were the combat rules, which in my opinion are the weakest part of the game. We later devoted much attention to improving that section, between the playtest copy that you saw and the final version. I argued with my collaborator on that section. I felt that the combat rules were overly complicated and overwritten. Unfortunately because of our tight deadline, we didn't make all the

changes that I would have liked. There will be a new system released by the time this interview appears. (See Ares #3, ARENA OF DEATH).

**MK:** Why did you decide to do a fantasy role-playing game in the first place?

**EG:** I have been playing role-playing games for over four years. I started with DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, just like everyone else. But there was one thing that always bothered me about D&D; they were one of the worst set of rules ever written, even though the basic idea was excellent. I'm talking about the original version, right now there are about 31 flavors of D&D. I thought I could do a better game.

I set up certain basics for my game. There had to be a Gamemaster; the rules had to be well-organized; it had to be consistent with legend and mythology—unlike D&D which calls monsters by one name and has it be another monster—and I wanted the system to hang together well. I think that in DRAGONQUEST I succeeded on these four points. It may not be a perfect game, but it's a good one.

**MK:** Was DRAGONQUEST something you wanted to do, or was it just something that SPI scheduled?

**EG:** I suggested it to SPI. We spent about a year negotiating how it was going to be done. SPI did not understand what a fantasy role-playing game was, they thought they could just knock off another PANZERGRUPPE GUERIAN.

**MK:** How much of this game do you owe to your previous design of COMMANDO? Is there any relationship?

**EG:** Very little, except in philosophy. There are a few ideas that I carried over from COMMANDO, but not the rules



A series of painted examples of Heritage's **KNIGHTS OF KING ARTHUR** game.

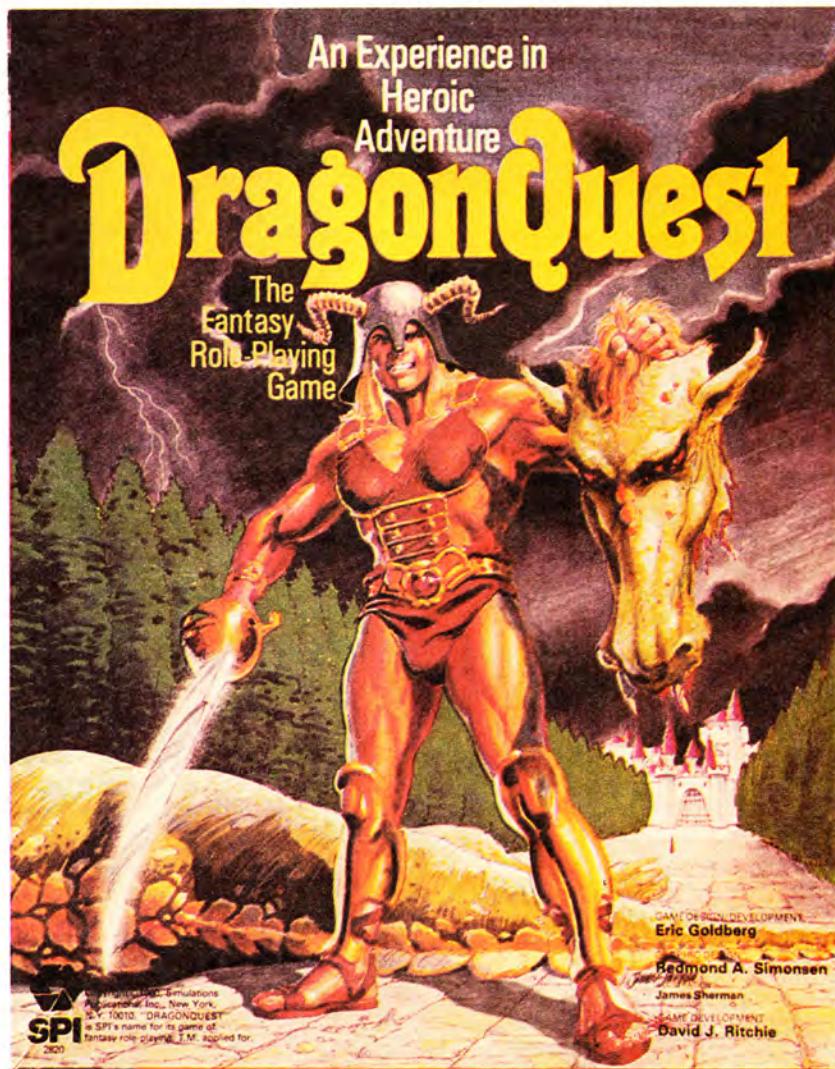
system per se. COMMANDO did get an award for the Best Role-Playing Game of 1979, so maybe I should have borrowed more heavily than I did. But I felt that there were things in COMMANDO that were not appropriate to DRAGONQUEST.

**MK:** If we talk about your three best known designs: DRAGONQUEST is different from COMMANDO, but they both involve some experimentation. And then KURSK, another title that you did for SPI, is a totally different type of game from the other two.

**EG:** Yes, that's true. KURSK is what's usually called a historical simulation which is on the other end of the field from fantasy role-playing. I was quite lucky in the case of KURSK because I had the aid of someone in the National Archives who made a five-year study of the battle and with that type of support I was able to concentrate on the game aspect of the design—to try and re-create the feel of the battle.

**MK:** Is there any crossover from one game to another?

**EG:** Not entirely. There are some other games that "steal" from each other. Some of the work I did on JOHN CARTER OF MARS (for SPI) ended up in DRAGONQUEST. The way that the encounter system for DRAGONQUEST was supposed to work, was fleshed out from JOHN CARTER. It may not be obvious to most gamers, but I know it's there. It's always good to "steal" from previous designs rather than doing something completely new. If there's an existing system that works, you shouldn't end up beating your head on



The cover of Eric Goldberg's fantasy game, **DRAGONQUEST**.

the wall coming up with a mediocre new system just for the sake of being different.

**MK:** If you use the same system in two games, aren't people buying the same game twice and only changing the location?

**EG:** That's like saying if you bake two cakes with sugar, that you're making the same cake. That really isn't true. Systems represent different things. If movement in two campaigns work the same way in history, then it makes sense to use the same system in two games. However if the combat system is different in both these games then you really do have two different games.

**MK:** Let's assume that some game company had achieved a "perfect" system for some period of battle, for instance, a perfect WW II tank battle . . .

**EG:** I'd like to see it, by the way.

**MK:** . . . once that has been accomplished, then all they have to do is move the maps in the games around from the East Front to the West Front and to the various other areas. They could just churn out one game after another, just give people different maps.

**EG:** That's true, if, and only if, someone would find that perfect system. You're forgetting that using the same system over again does have some advantages. A good deal of the people who buy games like to see the same system applied to different battles.

**MK:** Because they don't have to learn the rules all over again?

**EG:** Yes, and because they have probably found a system that they prefer. I like to play the PANZERGRUPPE GU-DERIAN system from SPI and I would prefer more battles using it, over learning a whole new system that I might not like. Of course I would not like to see a game with the PANZER BATTLES system (also from SPI) which is a very poor game.

**MK:** I'm sure that many of our readers have not gone through the complete process of designing a game. Where does it start?

**EG:** First you must decide on a subject. Let's assume that it's going to be a fantasy role-playing game, like DRAGONQUEST, or it's a WW II battle game—in the case of KURSK. At this point you must do your research.

In the case of a game like DRAGONQUEST you would have to get a good grounding in mythology and legend, and in some of the mechanics in the field. With KURSK you would have to get a lot of historical research done.

Once you've completed your research you must decide on what the "statement" of the game will be. In the case of KURSK, I wanted that statement to be that it was a battle of attrition; while in DRAGONQUEST I wanted to make it clear that you are playing a character, not a series of numbers. I am



Eric Goldberg's latest adventure game for SPI.

a 16-14-22-23. You're not playing a role if you do that, you're just playing some numbered characteristics.

Then I must work out the separate systems that I must use. In KURSK it was movement-combat-artillery-deploying units. In DRAGONQUEST it was character generation-combat-monsters-magic-adventure-skills.

Once I have this sketched out I would write a first draft of the rules. At this point I would also have people playing it. If it works I would go on from there.

**MK:** Let's back up a bit. Don't you have to have approval from the company that you're working for; on the title and other related considerations like game size, projected price, etc.?

**EG:** In the case of the games that I did for SPI, I had approval before I even began doing research. Many freelance designers will choose a title on the hope that they can make a good game of it. For instance, John Prados did THIRD REICH for Avalon Hill and did not deal with them until he had the game ready. And they took it, because WW II strategic level games were popular then.

**MK:** With a philosophy and a first draft, what then becomes your next step?

**EG:** The next step will be to get even more people to play it. Hopefully it will be experienced people who can pick apart a raw design rather than just players who are having fun. If it doesn't "feel right" they're going to have to tell you where and why it doesn't work. They have to tell you: "If you fix these things it will work."

Eventually if you keep trying hard enough, you will get the game to work. A lot of games on the market that don't work have probably bypassed this stage.

**MK:** Do you find that you like some playtesters more than others?

**EG:** Of course. It's just like any other job. Some people are better at it than others. I trust some playtesters more than others.

**MK:** How do they express their thoughts about the game to you? Do they write an evaluation?

**EG:** I generally sit down and "debrief" them. Just like a staff meeting in the army. I don't want them to think that they are hurting my feelings by telling me what's wrong with the game. If they aren't honest then a fault in the game could be carried into the final version.

Once you get as close as a designer gets to the game it becomes very hard to pick out the flaws. I hope that they will come and give me the worst possible opinion of the game that they can. They over-react on purpose.

Hopefully I can eliminate their complaints without making too many changes in the game. I also have to be careful not to upset the basics of the game; like movement, objectives, etc. And without making any new problems.

**MK:** Does it ever happen that a group of playtesters will be so experienced that they will play the game without reading the rules too closely? In effect, they are assuming that you have included something that is basic to all games, and therefore overlooked by them? After all with their experience the game will work.

**EG:** Yes it does happen. You will end up with a situation where the public gets it and the missing factors could cause serious problems.

**MK:** How do you try to eliminate this?

**EG:** Sometimes we use another form of testing called "blind-testing." We send the game out by mail to other testers. They can find these errors because they do not have the designer nearby to explain things to them. They just have a map, counters, and a rough copy of the rules. They are the last checkpoint. They have never seen the game before. They must work only from the manuscript, and if it works for them, then hopefully it will work when it's on the market.

**MK:** After playtesting is completed, what is the next step?

**EG:** A designer must then write a final draft of the rules, incorporating all of the changes that were made along the way. Taking off all the rough edges.

Of course it can happen that somewhere along the line someone blows the whistle and says it all doesn't work. Originally there was another designer working on KURSK, and the research he had was erroneous. It had very little to do with the battle. A guy in Alaska and a guy in Washington, D.C. said: "Wait a moment, there is something wrong here. I know this is not the battle of Kursk they're playing. It only looks something like it."

So even though I was asked to develop it, I was forced to re-design it. It had been done wrong. If that first KURSK had been released it would have been embarrassing, so we were lucky to catch it.

**MK:** When the game is finally released are you then finished with it?

**EG:** Then you begin to do the "errata," which is basically a list of corrections. Some players will say if you are issuing errata then you are admitting that the game has some serious problems. You show me some game on the market,

that is not ridiculously simple, and I will show you a game that has errata. It's just a question of whether or not a company is conscientious enough to release errata. These games are complex and in terms of the time frame that they are done, they just cannot be done perfectly. I have yet to see a "perfect" game.

**MK:** How long does it take from the initial draft of the rules to getting the game on the shelves?

**EG:** It varies widely. Most games take about five to six months.

**MK:** Would that be true for all games, no matter what the size?

**EG:** That is an average. A game like NAPOLEON AT WATERLOO (SPI) took about four months, but CAMPAIGNS FOR NORTH AFRICA took two and a half years.

**MK:** But some people feel that NAPOLEON is a "good" game, while CAMPAIGNS is not as good.

**EG:** That's true. But that's because some designs "click" and are a complete success, while other games have limited appeal.

**MK:** Why does a company embark on a project like CAMPAIGNS when they have a feeling all along (and I'm sure they did) that it might not be that successful?

**EG:** Saying that, it's like saying if you can't compose music as well as Beethoven, then don't write music.

**MK:** What's next for Eric Goldberg?

**EG:** Right now I'm working with West End Games on a Napoleonic game designed by John Prados called CAMPAIGNS OF NAPOLEON. I'm working on rules rewrites and testing the game. They've also got an Arabian Nights game in the pipeline, and a very strange sort of religious game.

I have talked to Avalon Hill about doing a fantasy role-playing game for them. I'd like it to be on a simpler level than DRAGONQUEST, so that it would attract more new gamers. I have been talking to some other companies that are interested in my services, but they may not be willing to pay me what I think I'm worth. I'm also busy writing a novel but that's only a sideline. △

## ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

**R**emember when you were a child and you played cowboys and Indians, or you played school. These were role-playing games. As Gary Gygax, major-domo of T.S.R. Hobbies and the designer of ADVANCED DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, puts it: "Cops and robbers is one of the first role-playing games anyone plays." And he should know since his game is going to be one of the most popular games of all time.

When you decided that you'd be the good guy and those broom handles were rifles, then you created your own role-playing game. In your imagination (and in the imagination of the other players) if you aimed that broom handle at someone and said "pow," it meant that he was supposed to fall down "dead." To you and your friends this became so real that you might argue whether or not you "got him." For as long as you played the game, you were really playing a part, a "role."

Of course these games even had rules—no running in the street, only six shots before "reloading," if you're shot then you're out of the game, etc. So when I'm talking about role-playing games you should be able to relate it to the experiences of your childhood.

In role-playing games, the designer (see the Eric Goldberg interview) writes rules for the game, which are guidelines for playing it. So instead of a

bunch of kids just running around, there is a system to it. Today's role-playing games cover a wide range of subjects and settings—it can be science-fiction or World War II, it can be pirates or fantasy (the most popular form), spies or the Wild West, it can even be DALLAS (just like the TV show).

No matter what the subject or the setting may be, there are some things that are basic to all these games.

**1—The Rules.** They set up the basic game. Like the rules in any other game they tell you what you can or cannot do. In a role-playing game the rules themselves tend to be rather informal because they are only designed to start off the play of the game. Most role-playing games have "loose" rules because the designers don't want the rules to inhibit playing the game. They feel that if the rules don't say too much, then you will be left to your own imagination. Other designers say that this is just a cop-out, a reason for not putting a lot of work into the rules. Whatever the designer's philosophy may be—his rules are only signposts, you must decide which way to turn, how fast to drive . . . No designer would argue with letting it "all hang out."

The rules indicate what the sequence of play should be, how to set-up the basic game, how to get the game

(continued on page 47)



A beautiful diorama, created by Mel Cohen, from *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Dr. Ernest Nora's two original Star Wars figures and James MacIntyre's orcs, all personally created.



# THE "EMPIRE" CASTS ITS INFLUENCE ON MODELING

Three superb modelers emerge from recent competitions with Star Wars "goodies."

By MELVILLE COHEN, JOHN D. MACINTYRE and DR. ERNEST NORA

**A**t recent competitions this year, three outstanding fantasy modelers emerged as competition winners with their scratchbuilding efforts. It also turned out to be the influence of *The Empire Strikes Back* which made itself most strongly felt among each of these talented modelers. Beginning with Melville Cohen, who is a curator with the Department of National Parks, following with Dr. Ernest Nora, who attempted his first scratch-built figures and ending with the excellent representations of John D. MacIntyre, we will look into their own work as described by themselves.

## Melville Cohen

This Diorama of Luke Skywalker's X-Wing Fighter crashed in the swamps began with the assembly and painting of the MPC kit which was more or less the only straightforward part of the operation. The scratchbuilding and conversion took place beginning with Luke's body, the lower part of which was reconstructed using A&B putty so as to allow him to stand on the wing. Yoda was entirely sculpted using the putty and R2D2 was also partially converted in the same way. The base was made from a piece of plywood, then covered with paper mache as was the main tree trunk. The intricate vine work on the tree was formed from various sizes of electrical wire beginning with heavy conduit and ending with the thinnest wire I could find. Although I do use an air brush in my modeling, in this diorama it was not used at all. I relied entirely on Acrylic paints and the dry brushing techniques in order to rush the completion of the piece as it was commissioned barely a week before the opening of Vul-Con VII in New Orleans. The wet parts of the swamp were finalized with quick-drying lacquer. By the way you might be inter-



My Worlds To Explore

ested to know that the mist effects in the swamp were achieved with dry ice during the photographing by my good friend, Viron Kersh.

## Dr. Ernest Nora

As a modeler, I have been making figures for approximately six years. However, this was my first endeavor into figures of a fantasy theme. The impact of *Star Wars* has been obvious in the modeling world over the past several years, and I felt that *The Empire Strikes Back* provided a wealth of subjects to model. This was the first time that I ever attempted to produce figures in this manner; the end results you can judge for yourself.

Work on these subjects, as with most forms of sculpture, began with drawings and examination of photographs. Movie stills and the program from *The*

*Empire Strikes Back* were extremely useful. After the preliminary sketching was done, a sculptured armature of the Ton-Ton and rider was made using wire from heavy paper clips. The joints of the armature were then affixed with 5-minute epoxy glue. This being accomplished, thin strips of epoxy putty were draped around the armature to simulate the various muscle groups of the figure being sculptured. This was allowed to stand for 24 hours.

It is very important in sculpting, at whatever scale, to maintain appropriate proportions and to conserve normal anatomical relationships to obtain a realistic looking figure.

After the preliminary work of the figure had been completed, more epoxy putty in small amounts was worked over the surface to simulate both the skin and the fur of the animal. The teeth and claws of the animal were also made

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with epoxy putty. The reins and belts were made from automotive pin striping. The base of the figure was built up with epoxy putty and then covered with model railroad earth. All paints used were Humbrol flat enamel. The only exception being high gloss clear enamel used for eyes, mouth, teeth, etc.

The other figures in this group were constructed in an identical manner.

## John D. MacIntyre

My Worlds to Explore piece was based on a painting by Ron Cobb and was basically sculpted with sculpy. The dragon's eyes were fashioned from taxidermy birds' glass eyes. Various pieces of equipment were a combination of styrene, commercial parts and sculpy. With the Ice Planet Defense vignette I combined some of the designs from *The Empire Strikes Back* with my own inventions to form the turret. Its base was a disposable plastic cup with vertical ribs made from Plastruct pieces while the walls of the turret itself were of hollow construction with a turned, laminated styrene top and bottom. The gun included Plastruct tubing combined with faceted beads. The hatch was made from EMA (Plastruct's big brother) vessel ends and assorted tubing sizes. The figures started out as Air-

fix Multipose Afrika Corps figures and were converted with Evergreen putty. The binoculars were a real bit of kit bashing and included binocular eye pieces with the body made from a German mess kit while the bottom was formed from a German potato masher grenade.

The Orcs of the Misty Mountains scene really incorporated the largest amount of converting and special detailing. Airfix Multipose Japanese Infantry were the starting basis for the figures with the commanders arm adapted from the Airfix Cuirassier. The Airfix Pikeman provided the breast plate on the standard bearer as well as the articulated plate armor on the commander. The studded shield leaning against the rock was adapted from a coat button. The ground work of the piece was carved from balsa wood and overlaid with modeling putty. All in all as can be seen, creating your own vignettes and dioramas in fantasy modeling starts with a heavy application of your own imagination combined with your adaptive resources of sculpting and kit bashing to suit your own needs. There are so many materials and pieces of kits about that the only restrictions upon you are your skills in adapting whatever is at hand to accomplish what you set out to do. △



Ice Planet Defense

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**Monarch**

PHOTOS: PHILIP O. STEARNS

The first new line of fantasy figures to be released this issue are the work of Cliff Sanderson and are known as the 54mm Stygian line. These include small humanoids known as Varls which are omnivorous and particularly enjoy human female flesh. They are controlled by a very nasty, witchlike, winged creature and a splendid barbarian. These are excellently sculpted figures and are very characteristic of this fine artist. They are being released through Greenwood & Ball, the British firm distributed in this country by Coulter-Bennett, Ltd., 12158 Hamlin Street, North Hollywood, California.

Cliff Sanderson is also the contributing sculptor to another superb line of fantasy for Monarch Miniatures with his very zestful 54mm Nymphs and Satyrs merrily cavorting together in some sylvan glade. These, too, are most skillfully sculpted and reveal a gay abandon in atmosphere. Villy Praestegaard continues in his series of Roman Gladiators which, although not entirely fantasy, fulfill a reasonable gap in many

of the stories so oriented. These figures portray a reality of proportion which must have been evident among the lesser combatants who were not always the splendid specimens of Conan-like humans. Monarch Miniatures, P.O. Box 4195, Long Island City, NY 11104.

A new sculptor to enter the fantasy field is Al Charles. He is well known for his ancients in the military field, but he has now decided to create 54mm figures produced by himself rather than through other manufacturers. His first effort is a very resplendent lady with lance and shield mounted on a winged horse. This makes a very interesting piece and will easily accommodate any number of outworld heroines. For further information, contact Al Charles, 46 Buchanan Road, Walsall WS4-2EN, England.

From our old friends Imrie-Risely we have an interesting 75mm knight in an enchanted garden filled with fairies and leprechauns which is certain to delight all the devotees of the Arthurian legends. It is a totally charming presentation and various bits of the whole can

be purchased individually. I-R Miniatures, Box 89, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

Valiant Miniatures has presented us with four new releases of movie monsters in about 60mm. These are well sculpted and give us the Mummy, Dracula, the Wolf Man and Frankenstein's Monster. These can easily be worked into dioramas or will stand very well on their own. Valiant Enterprises, Ltd., 97 Hickory Commons, Antioch, IL 60027.

Two new releases from Superior Models include a splendid angry Wizard clutching what is presumably his magic glass globe, this one by Ray Lamb of America, while the other is an impossibly overladen Space Marine called David Smith by Ron Spicer. These 90mm figures are outstanding in their proportions and detailing.

Under the title of MA9 Figure Primer, Floquil has reissued their excellent paint in an aerosol can. I have used this product for years when it was issued as RM9 railroad primer. It is an excellent covering paint which obscures no detail and is impervious to oxidation. △





PHOTO: PHILIP O. STEARNS

# THREE DIORAMAS— THREE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS

The works of a grand master revealed

By SHEPERD PAINE

**A**lthough these three dioramas share many common features—scale, setting, overall lighting, and format—the fundamental problems each presented during construction were very different.

The Swamp Ogre was my first venture into fantasy, and was completed in 1978. I had long admired the fantasy paintings of Frank Frazetta and was rather disappointed that no one had yet managed to capture the same feeling in a miniature format. The goal I set for myself, however, was not to duplicate a painting directly, but rather to capture the same mood in a different subject. As a result, The Swamp Ogre incorporates many standard Frazetta elements and details without being traceable to any particular painting. The Frazetta style, however, is more than just a matter of

physical details—composition (the arrangement of the figures), lighting and color play a very important part.

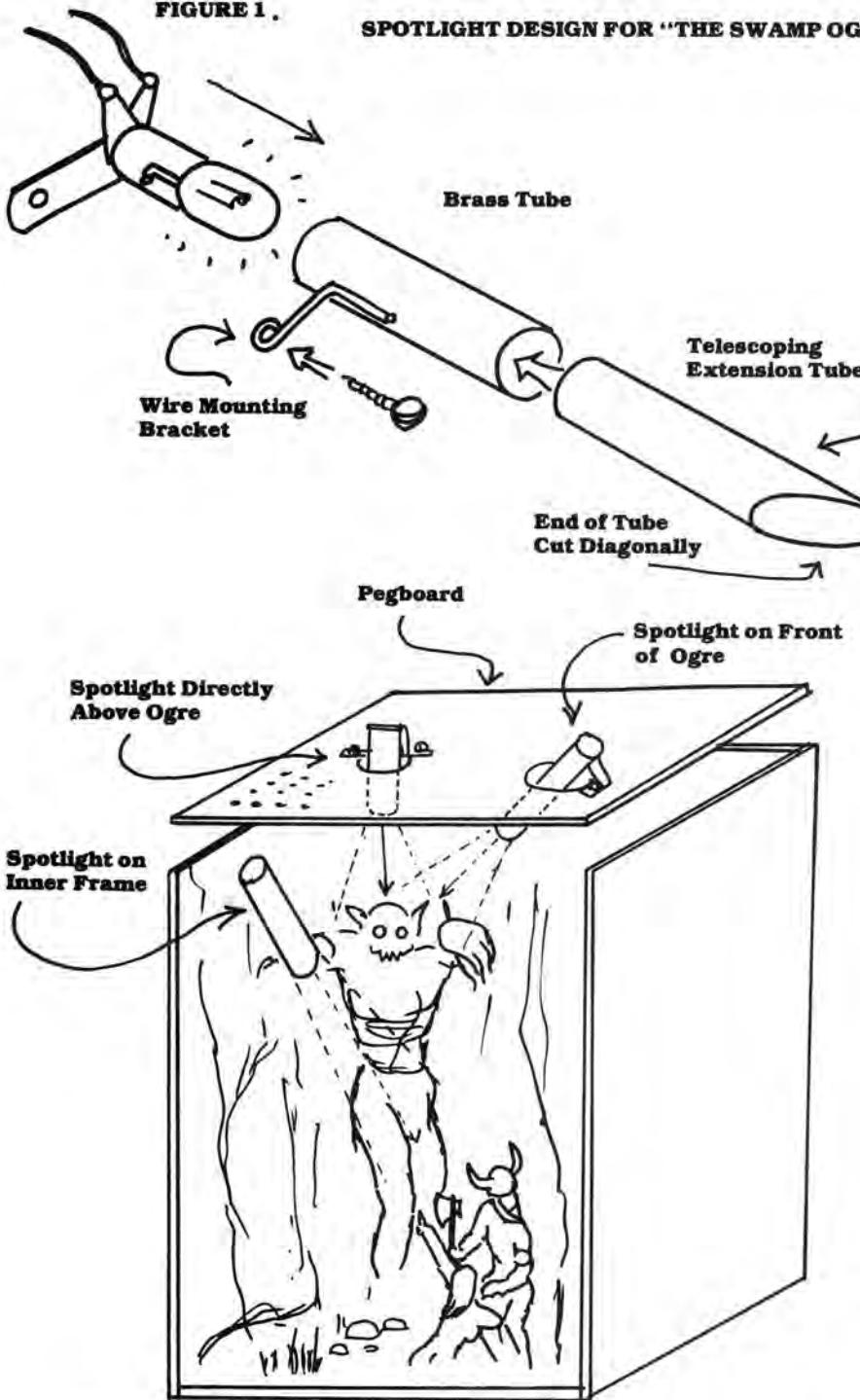
Composition would not prove terribly difficult, but the other two would provide a real challenge. The lush coloring that looks so great in the paintings can often look dangerously overworked in a three-dimensional format, so some care would have to be taken there. The dramatic lighting was to turn out to be my most effective creative device, as well as the most frustrating challenge. The lighting, more than any other single factor, would establish the mood of the piece.

Before lighting experiments could

**Left, The Swamp Ogre. Above, there's "Fun in the Shires" as a Hobbit contemplates his money.**

begin, however, the actual construction would have to be well under way. The figures were sculpted from epoxy putty and painted in artist's oils. The flesh areas of the figures (which are considerable!) were highlighted with pinks and shaded in greens, which give a successfully novel effect that I would not have dared to attempt before.

The Ogre is based on a number of similar types I had seen, with additional details taken from the reptile section of zoology books. The realistic drool dripping from his mouth is nothing more than a couple of nylon bristles from a hair brush coated with five-minute epoxy glue. The setting was fairly straightforward. Roots were used to provide the gnarled and twisted trees, with additional serpents and lizards made in epoxy putty. For maximum

**FIGURE 1.****SPOTLIGHT DESIGN FOR "THE SWAMP OGRE"****FIGURE 2. LIGHTING ARRANGEMENT FOR "THE SWAMP OGRE."**

flexibility of lighting design, which would have to be made up as I went along, and for access for later repairs that might be necessary, the entire scene was constructed as a unit that could slide in and out of the outer case. This unit consisted not only of the base, water, trees and figures, but the back and side walls as well.

The scene called for a dramatic contrast between light and dark, illuminating the central characters but leaving other parts of the scene in semi-darkness. This effect could best be achieved by the use of miniature spotlights. However, the source of the

light should not be evident, so these spotlights would have to be masked in such a way that the lights themselves were completely hidden and no indication of their position given. I had worked out the basic mechanics of the spotlights themselves on a previous diorama. These are shown in the drawing (fig. 1). Further experimentation led to the development of the new extension tube design shown. It's cut on the diagonal to conceal the light source from the viewer without diminishing the light cast. The spotlights over the diorama are mounted to a piece of pegboard that fits onto the top of the

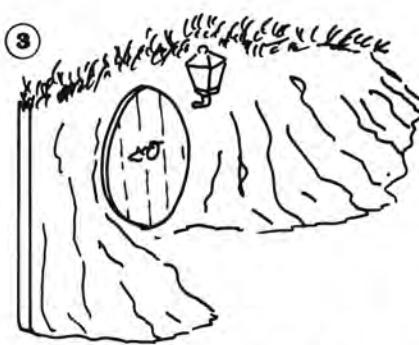
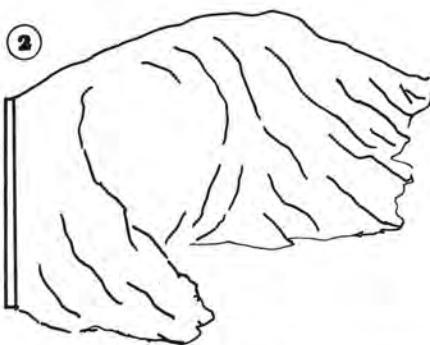
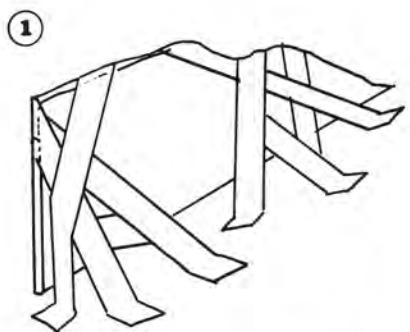
scene. The pegboard made it easy to fasten the fixtures, etc. in place, and also to cut the necessary holes for the spotlights. The diagram (fig. 2) shows how the spotlights were arranged. Two were focused on the Ogre, one directly above and one above and to the front, while a third was mounted on the inner frame and aimed at the hero and heroine. The inner frame, three inches deep, was included in the design from the beginning, as a means of cutting down on the amount of room light "spilling" into the scene. A small grain-of-wheat "filler" spot was added to the side of the inner frame to illuminate the back of the couple. Finally, a pair of red grain-of-wheat bulbs were used for the Ogre's eyes, the wire leads of which disappear into the branches behind his head and are wired to the pegboard overhead.

Early in construction, it occurred to me that a light coming up from underneath the water of the swamp might add a nice eerie touch to the scene. Realizing that there was really nothing to lose (if I didn't like the effect, I could simply turn it off), I went ahead and cut an irregular hole in the plywood floor of the scene and covered it with a sheet of plexiglass. The seams were liberally caulked with five-minute epoxy, the trees and figures installed, and several layers of clear polyester casting resin poured in to form the water. Nearly everyone asks what I used for the bubbles of swamp gas; these are nothing more than several sizes of navigator's domes from plastic airplane kits, dropped into place as the final layer of resin was setting. A standard 12 v. light was installed under the scene (fastened to the floor of the outer case) to provide the light.

To give maximum control of the lighting, a separate "pot" (potentiometer, or dimmer) was wired into each light. The lights could then be raised and lowered in relation to each other until the desired effect was obtained. This was particularly important in the case of the Ogre's eyes and the underwater light, both of which had to be precisely controlled if the right subtle effect was to be achieved.

The Shady Side of the Shire is one of those whimsical ideas that tend to strike me in my giddier moments. Most of these are really just three-dimensional cartoons that are not worth the effort required to do them. Cartoons, after all, are subjects for quick sketches, not full-blown oils on canvas.

This idea, however, was a bit different, since the scenery was simple and the few figures required could easily be modified from commercial castings. In short, it could retain its whimsical flavor without involving a major production.



Erect a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " plywood "flat" and outline the ground contours with a framework of masking tape

Cover the masking tape framework with ground material

Add static grass along the top, install lamp and door, and paint.

#### FIGURE 3. SCENERY FOR "THE SHADY SIDE OF THE SHIRE"

The figures are by Superior, with minor pose modifications (my own favorite is the young Hobbit dubiously counting his coins while the others ogle the minimal charms of the lady in the doorway). Following the standard boxed diorama rule of modeling only what can actually be seen, the lady consists of only a head and one hand, carefully positioned to suggest the rest of the body out of sight; they are the only parts scratch-built for the scene. The Hobbit houses are celluclay applied over a masking tape and plywood frame (see figure 3) with styrene doors and modified model railroad street

lamps. The trees, as usual, are roots. The lighting is, again, very straightforward, consisting only of a single 12 v. fixture mounted to the top of the inner frame behind a blue filter, to give an overall moonlight effect, and a similar fixture with a yellow filter behind the open doorway.

The big problem with this scene proved to be one of comic timing. For this kind of humorous idea to work, it is important that the viewer should not catch on to the joke right away, but neither should he lose interest and walk away before seeing it. Delayed reactions of this sort are difficult to orchestrate with any precision, so I gave the diorama several "out-of-town tryouts" by testing the reactions of a few friends before displaying it at a show. My first few "guinea pigs," for all their good intentions, simply failed to get the idea at all—the red lights by themselves were just too subtle, and even one red light, with the others yellow, was still not enough to carry the idea across. Eventually, by adding fresh clues like the sign and the "soiled dove" in the doorway with each successive test, I was finally able to get the reaction and timing that I wanted.

I rather doubt that Tolkien ever con-

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**The watchful eyes of a retreating army, as they wait in the dark.**

sidered the possibility of a red-light district in the Shire, or any other part of Middle Earth, for that matter, but then the sheer implausibility of the whole thing is what makes this small bit of Tolkieniana so unusual!

The rest of the lighting is similar to *The Shady Side of the Shire*. General illumination is provided by a 12 v. fixture with a blue filter. The jack o'lantern is lit by a grain-of-wheat bulb inserted from behind and masked with a bit of fiberglass insulation (the fiberglass transmits light, giving an even glow to the whole inside of the pumpkin).

Although fantasy scenes of this sort do not comprise a majority of my work (historical subjects have and probably

always will), nevertheless I do find them a delightful and refreshing change, a chance to free myself from the rigors of historical research and allow my mind to wander where it chooses. And that, I suppose, is as close to a fundamental definition of fantasy as one is likely to find anywhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

Napoleon invaded Russia in the summer of 1812 with one of the largest armies ever assembled in Europe. The campaign that followed was bloody but successful, culminating in the capture of Moscow in September. The Emperor clearly expected the Czar's government to sue for peace at this point, and delayed a fatal two months in the

burned-out city waiting for emissaries who never came. Finally, realizing that his army could never spend the winter in a city which offered little food and minimal shelter, Napoleon ordered a withdrawal to his supply base at Smolensk, nearly half the distance he had come.

Thus began the long series of ghastly events and misfortunes that has come to be known as the retreat from Moscow. The Russian winter set in early, first with mud and then with snow, and the long columns of troops, heavily laden with the loot of Moscow, gradually began to lose all form, discipline, and substance. Wagons, baggage, and artillery were abandoned in the morass of mud, and then men and animals



**Like most, this scene was in my mind for several years before starting work. The concept began with the wolves. The cold and menacing reflection of the fire in their eyes is what really makes the whole scene work.**

fire in their eyes is what really makes the whole scene work. The idea had occurred to me several years ago when experimenting with fiber optics for another diorama, and I noticed that the glow at the end of the fiber was visible only from certain angles, much like a reflection, and that as the viewer's eye shifted from one part of the scene to the next, the reflections would appear and disappear accordingly. The only trick remaining was to get the fibers aimed in such a way that the eyes would appear and disappear in pairs, rather than singly.

This scene was originally intended for my now-standard scale of 1/18, but the first tentative experiments with the figures quickly brought the realization that the space required to execute it properly in that scale would simply be too great. Accordingly, a downshift was made to 1/32nd, and the scene was brought within more manageable size limits.

The figures and cannon are a mixture of Historex material and the wolves are converted Elastolin Alsatian dogs. The spacial arrangement might have been condensed to accommodate the larger size, but I wanted the "lost in the depths of the forest primeval" feeling that only tall trees and plenty of space could provide.

Compositionally, the thing that intrigued me about this scene as it developed was the contrast of the blue night and the orange fire, keeping the wolves as a delayed impact. The color effect was better than I had hoped for, and rheostats allowed me to control the degree of darkness and the glow of the wolves eyes to just the desired effect. △

froze by the thousand in the bitter cold and snow. By the time the army reached Smolensk, it was little more than a mob, and there it had to face an even more bitter truth—the promised supplies were almost non-existent, and they would have to struggle all the way to the Polish frontier before they could find sustenance. The retreat continued, harassed with increasing vigor by the pursuing Russian army, who sensed a mortally wounded prey and were not about to let it go. That the army survived at all was a minor miracle; at one point the ramshackle bridges thrown across the Berezina River were all that saved it. It was largely the determination of small groups of stragglers to survive that kept the army from com-

pletely disappearing. By the time they recrossed the Niemen into Poland, the main body had shrunk from the 500,000 who had started out six months before to a pitiful 20,000. For the next month and a half, small groups of stragglers poured in, each with its own tale of horror and deprivation. Eventually, about half of the men who had started out from Moscow returned, many so badly shattered physically and emotionally that they never served again. The rest disappeared forever in the frozen waste of the Russian steppes.

Like most, this scene was in my mind for several years before starting work. The concept began with the wolves. The cold and menacing reflection of the

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## MPC CONTINUES EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

MPC, the model kit division of Fundimensions, has announced three additions to its line of **STAR WARS™** plastic kits based on **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK™**. These new items should be on sale now, and will join the Rebel Snow Speeder™, Imperial Star Destroyer™, Millennium Falcon™, and other kits already available.

Two of the kits are based on the Hoth™ ice planet sequence of the film, and the Imperial AT-AT Walker™ is in both of them. The first kit, to be shipped in August, is of the Walker itself. The model stands about 8" high and features a movable turret "head," and poseable legs.

The second kit is a Hoth battleground diorama, with much action depicted on a 12"x18" vacuum formed base. Included are three Walkers, Snow Speeders, laser guns, 45 figures, and part of the rebel hanger with X-Wing Fighter™.

Dagobah™ provides a change of local for the third kit, which is also a complete scene. This one shows Yoda™ and Luke Skywalker™ inside Yoda's house, while R2-D2™ stands outside looking in through the window. The roof of the house will be removable for viewing the complete interior.

## Airfix 1/25 Scale PTERANODON

Speaking as a dinosaur fan, a really

good kit of one of the many species of prehistoric flying reptiles has been long overdue. Unfortunately, now that Airfix has released their new kit of the Pteranodon—the best known of the pterosaurs—that "really good kit" is still forthcoming.

The Pteranodon is Airfix's seventh in its line of prehistoric kits. The previous six have all been interesting but disappointing, because Airfix has ignored all the revolutionary new discoveries revealing the dinosaurs to have been warm-blooded, dynamic, fast-moving, efficient, quick-witted, highly successful creatures not at all like the traditionally accepted "big stupid fossil lizards."

It is now known, and has been for several years, that all of the pterosaurs were warm-blooded, active flyers who were covered overall with insulating coats of fine fur. Indeed, some of them, like the recently discovered Soviet pterosaur *Sordes Pilosus*, actually had thick bushy thatches of body fur.

Airfix missed it all; their Pteranodon is warty, scaly and badly textured. The head and body look like they have a terminal case of acne. The first thing I did upon opening the kit was to grab some coarse sandpaper and start removing surface detail. In addition to warts and scales, the wings have multiple heavy creases in them that look very much like the ribbing in a bat's wing. This is an unfortunate coincidence, since there are no ribs in a pterosaur's wing, and very little visible similarity between bat and pterosaur wings.

TM: © Lucasfilm, Ltd. (LFL) 1980

Another failing: all pterosaurs had three very delicate fingers at the mid-joint on each wing (the leading edge wing spar is a fourth, elongated finger) and a very elegant wing/arm skeletal structure that was evident through the skin of the wings. Airfix's attempt to duplicate these features is clumsy at best; the "fingers" are little more than a lump of plastic. The feet, which were also very finely constructed on the real animal, fare no better in plastic than do the fingers.

Above and beyond the conceptual flaws there is a major engineering flaw; the parts-fit is the absolute pits. This is true on almost every joint. A lot of filler is needed.

Then there's the method of display. Airfix designed its Pteranodon in a flying attitude, which makes good sense, but then they give you a low, flat rock for a base, with a plug that fits into a slot in the reptile's body. Having this warty monstrosity belly-down on a rock, flapping its wings, and carrying a fish in its mouth is the height of the ridiculous.

Yes, there is a prehistoric fish in the kit too—it looks like some member of the Coelacanth family—and, aside from the same crummy part fit, the fish looks pretty good!

Assembled, with surface detail sanded down and gaping joints filled, and displayed in some other way, the over-



all effect isn't too bad. It has an antiquated, lizardy sort of look, but then most people still expect that in a dinosaur. (And never mind going into why pterosaurs weren't dinosaurs, it's too long and complicated.)

I can't help doing some comparison of this kit with the only other kit ever produced of a flying reptile, which was Aurora's larger scale kit of the same animal. Aurora's kit was produced before many of the new-concept discoveries, but even so has far less offensive skin detail than the Airfix kit. The biggest problem in the Aurora kit—aside from the same stupid fingers-and-feet mess—was the cutesy-poo gimmickry. It had hinges so the wings could flap,

and a ball-and-socket joint in the neck. In overall comparison between the two, I find that I like the head of the Aurora kit better than the entire remaining total of both kits put together. However, either kit can be built up into an attractive display piece if built by a determined modeler who has a couple of good, recent dinosaur books at hand.

Final comment: BOO, AIRFIX! Get your act together! Read Adrian J. Desmond's book, *The Hot-Blooded Dinosaurs*, or John C. McLoughlin's *Archosaurs*. Then, junk all your old tooling and start over! And take a hint from someone who knows—start with a *D*enonychus!

—Dave Cockrum

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# MONSTER KIT CHECKLIST

(continued from page 21)

Kit #	Kit Name	Scale	Years	Remarks
637	The Hanging Cage	1/13	71 - 71	
638	Vampirella	1/13	71 - 71	Two sets of arms and legs.
641	Dracula	1/12	71 - 71	Two sets of arms and legs.
642	Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	1/12	71 - 71	Three heads; two sets of arms.
643	The Giant Insect	1/13	71 - 71	Original Aurora design.

*Monsters of the Movies Series:* These were the last monster kits made by Aurora, and some of the Monster Scenes tooling was used. All were snap-together, and all but the Japanese monsters came with glow parts.

651	Frankenstein Monster	1/12	75 - 77	Climbing up hill.
652	The Wolfman	1/12	75 - 77	In the woods.
653	Creature From The Black Lagoon	1/12	75 - 77	Underwater scene.
654	Dr. Jekyll	1/12	75 - 77	Two heads and arms from 642; new body.
655	Mr. Hyde	1/12	75 - 77	Street scene; figure parts from 642.
656	Dracula	1/12	75 - 77	Descending dungeon stairs; figure parts from 641 (no extras).
657	Rodan		75 - 77	Smashing downtown Tokyo.
658	Ghidrah		75 - 77	Destroying airport.

## LINDBERG

272	Krimson Terror	65 - 65
273	Creeping Crusher	65 - 65
274	Green Ghoul	65 - 65
275	Mad Mangler	65 - 65

## MARX

Although these weren't kits, these one-piece polyethylene figures of the Universal movie monsters are included here because they were very well done, and were inspired by the original Aurora kits.

Frankenstein	1/13	63 - 64
The Mummy	1/13	63 - 64
Hunchback	1/13	63 - 64
The Creature	1/13	63 - 64
The Phantom	1/13	63 - 64
Wolfman	1/13	63 - 64

## MEGO

74040	King Kong—The Last Stand
MONOGRAM	

6300	Godzilla	78 - 69	Reissue of the Aurora kit; glow.
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## MPC/FUNDIMENSIONS

*Dark Shadows Series:* Both kits contained parts that duplicated parts molded in colored styrene. These kits also had arms that were molded in a soft "Thermo-Plastic." The arms had a wire armature, and the builder could bend the limbs into different positions.

1-1550	Barnabas	1/8	70 - 72
1-1552	The Werewolf	1/8	70 - 72

*Walt Disney's Pirates of the Caribbean Series:* Based on the popular Disney park attraction, each kit featured "Zap/Action" moving parts triggered by a concealed button.

1-5001	Dead Men Tell No Tales	1/12	73 - 74	Skeleton raises arm holding gun.
1-5002	Hoist High The Jolly Roger	1/12	73 - 74	Pirate swings sword.
1-5003	Condemned To Chains Forever	1/12	73 - 74	Skeleton fights off alligator.
1-5004	Fate Of The Mutineers	1/12	73 - 74	Skeleton tries to save his friend, but pulls off his arm.
1-5005	Dead Man's Raft	1/12	73 - 74	Skeleton pops out of hatch.
1-5006	Ghost Of The Treasure Guard	1/12	73 - 74	Pirate attacks skeleton guard.
1-5007	Freed In The Nick Of Time	1/12	73 - 74	One skeleton cuts chain holding another.

*Walt Disney's Haunted Mansion Series:* These kits featured the same "Zap/Action" gimmick found in the Pirate kits.

1-5050	Grave Robber's Reward	1/12	74 - 74	Body jumps out of casket to grab grave robber.
1-5051	The Vampire's Midnight Madness	1/12	74 - 74	Vampire raises arm.
1-5052	Play It Again, Sam!	1/12	74 - 74	Mummy pops out of organ.
1-5053	Escape From The Crypt	1/12	74 - 74	Executioner smashes chain and skeleton comes out of casket.

*Strange Change Series:* Each kit features a container that changes its contents every time it is opened.

1-0901	Vampire	1/12	74 - 76	Vampire in coffin changes into bones.
1-0902	Mummy	1/12	74 - 76	Mummy in sarcophagus changes from rest to restless.
1-0903	Time Machine	1/16	74 - 76	Time traveler goes back to the age of dinosaurs.

*The Gigantics Series:* These kits depict giant insects smashing through city scenes. The buildings, vehicles and figures in these scenes are to various small scales, and are not in proper proportion to each other. For the most part, the model insects are about two times life size. Cardboard backgrounds are also included.

1-0501	Huge Tarantula	75 - 76	
1-0502	Colossal Mantis	75 - 76	Sold in England by Airfix, 05850-2, 76-77.
1-0503	Gigantic Wasp	75 - 76	
1-0504	Rampaging Scorpion	75 - 76	Sold in England by Airfix, 05851-5, 76-77.

*Haunted Glo-Head Series:* These were kits of large monster heads supported by hands; there were no bodies. All were snap-together and glow.

1-0301	The Vampire	1/2.6	75 - 77
1-0302	The Werewolf	1/2.6	75 - 77
1-0303	The Apeman	1/2.6	75 - 77
1-0304	The Mummy	1/2.6	75 - 77

*Others:*

1-1961	Alien	1/9.5	80 - 80	From the movie; movable parts, including "tongue."
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## MULTIPLE

*Ripley's Believe It Or Not! Series:* These kits were presented humorously, and included funny looking victims. But, the devices could be reworked and used with other, more realistic figures.

979	Torture Wheel	1/13	66 - 66
980	Torture Chair	1/9.7	66 - 66
981	Iron Maiden	1/12	66 - 66

## UPC

*Ultra Man Series:* These were originally Japanese kits that were reissued in the United States during the first American run of the Japanese TV series.

6011	Pagos	67 - 69
6012	Pegila	67 - 69

## Role-Playing Games

(continued from page 33)

started, etc. Don't look for rules like something you would find in MONOPOLY or any game like it. You should find that the rules read something like a short introduction to a novel or a play. It gives you just enough of the plot and setting to get you started, but then you have to play the story out. The rules don't give you a synopsis of the middle or the end—it only starts you off.

"You're a caveman in the middle of a prehistoric jungle. There are some large trees and some mountains nearby. It is already the Stone Age, so you have fire and some simple tools. There are others with you . . ."

"You're sitting in a bar in some large city. A mysterious woman passes you a note. It reads:

*On the thirteenth floor of the Smythe Building you will find a map. A treasure map. If you do not find this map within one hour it will be lost forever.*

She whispers: "Beware, beware," and disappears into the crowd. You don't have much time to act. Check your pockets. You have a penknife, a small flashlight, and about \$300 in cash. You are trained in the martial arts, you are an expert climber, and you once worked for a secret section of the CIA, where you got most of your training. How do you intend to get the map?

Wait a minute, who made all of this up?

2—*The Gamemaster.* The rules set the game, but the Gamemaster is God. He has created this adventure for you. He creates the puzzle, the maze, the situation, whatever. You must work it out. According to the rules you can do certain things, but you must use these in the world that he has created. You can only see as much of this as he will let you.

Before any role-playing game can start, the Gamemaster has decided what they will be. He may give that story in the skyscraper, or he might decide that you will explore the depths of a medieval castle . . .

"You are standing in front of a castle with walls about 300 feet high. The walls are so slippery that you cannot get a foothold or a handhold. The only thing that you do find is a large oak door with a metal ring for a handle.

"Inside the castle is the king's daughter. Rescue her and not only do you win her hand, but you will be rewarded with a fabulous treasure. But remember, brash one, there are traps. Monsters that would not hesitate to destroy you. Sights that will melt your courage. Rooms of gold, diamonds and other precious things. Weapons that will help you—if you know how to use them . . .

What do you wish to do?"

Simple, just open the door. After you tell the Gamemaster that you are trying the handle, he replies that it doesn't open the door. What next?

Batter it down.

With what?

Oh! O.K. I'll try my sword.

The door topples under your mighty blows, but you broke the sword. You look into the doorway and all you see is pitch black. . .

Sure the Gamemaster knows what's next. He knows where everything is and you have to find it. You have to imagine yourself tramping through this castle without your sword and without knowing what is behind the next corner. That's the fun of the game, finding out what's in store for you and seeing if you can deal with it.

Is he God? Of course he is. He created this world that you're exploring. A good Gamemaster creates a world that is challenging but it can't be so deadly that you get killed before you get anywhere. It must be life or death for your character, but you should be able to survive if you use your talents to the limit. A Gamemaster that "kills" off players too easily is no fun. A world that is a real challenge makes the game all the more enjoyable.

You've got the rules and the Gamemaster has created a "world," what next?

3—*Character Generation.* In real-life, people have certain talents, certain attributes like strength, intelligence, endurance, charisma, special skills (the ability to use weapons or martial arts, combat training, etc.). Your character in the game must be assigned such characteristics. Once you decide what character you want to play, you roll the special dice for the game that will give you these attributes. The higher the number, the more your character will have of that skill, ability, and characteristic. The importance of these attributes come up very quickly in the game. If you have to open a door with your body (assuming that there is nothing handy to batter it with) then the more strength you have, the greater the chances are that you will knock down that door. If the Gamemaster has created a door that has a factor of 8, and your strength is only 7, then you are not going through that door. On the other hand, if you encounter a monster with a strength of 3, and you have a strength of 10, you will make short work of it.

Don't neglect the other factors of your character. The ability to use weapons might just save your life in a tight spot. Or intelligence might help you to outwit the evil wizard. Charisma will help you in getting other characters to follow you in your holy quest. Knowledge of witchcraft and black magic might be just the thing to take on that demon. The rules



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give you the basic attributes, the dice give the proportions or amounts of each.

In real-life you can go to school to improve your mind, you can take fencing lessons, you can work out with weights and increase your strength—the same thing is true for most role-playing games.

**4—Character Improvement.** When you first get started it is all new to you. Eventually you might become involved in a campaign. A campaign is when you are using the same character in more than just one session of the game. If your character continues on his adventures he will improve his attributes and develop some experience. As your character improves you must find more challenging worlds. Since his abilities have increased he is now capable of greater challenges. The complexity and danger of the worlds should increase. No beginning player should put his character in the same game with another character that has faced and beaten the challenge of 10 games.

Part of the appeal of role-playing games is the social aspect of the game; the characters can band together.

**5—The Party.** By joining together players can pool their characters to try and overcome the Gamemaster's world. Combining their resources much like a group of people might join together in real-life to accomplish some common purpose. In a game like MONOPOLY it's "every man for himself." In role-playing games there is a lot of chatter around the table, it may be mystifying to those who are not familiar, and it all represents communication between characters. To those playing the game, they're just walking through an enchanted forest, and everyone is watching out for each other.

Once you've played role-playing games for a while you might decide that you would like to be the Gamemaster in your own game. You may be hesitant about getting started. Have no fear. The gaming industry has become so sophisticated that virtually every role-playing game has supplements available.

**6—Supplements.** These supplements have the world neatly laid out on a scale-map. It also gives an explanation of the basic setting of the adventure. It gives the neophyte and the experienced Gamemaster a good start and a good bit of direction. In the past one of the disadvantages of being a Gamemaster was the work involved in creating the world. But with these new supplements a lot of the "hack" work has been eliminated. The maps are drawn, the adventure is laid out; all it needs is some finishing touches to get it ready to go.

There are other types of supplements that are useful for the players. Record

sheets—you can use these to keep track of your character's abilities and you can update it with any improvements. There are other sheets that can be used to keep track of your character's adventures, so you know what experience he may have gained.

A rather new item that has only recently become available is a "shield" for the Gamemaster. With this he can check his hidden map while the characters venture forth. It also has important statistics printed on the other side.

Many players like to add some realism to their game through the use of miniatures.

**7—Miniatures.** With lead miniatures (usually 25mm scale, about 1" tall) a player can make his character come to "life." He can paint the figure and either use it for display or he can use it in a game. Many Gamemasters are now setting up layouts of their adventures so that more and more players can use their miniatures. (You will notice that a large part of this magazine is devoted to these miniatures, maybe you'll find the one that can bring your character to life. The number of figures available on the market today is staggering. There are thousands available with new additions constantly being added to all lines.)

If you don't believe that this can be fun, then you haven't seen it. Just sit in on a session of a role-playing game, after you've seen and heard about fifteen minutes of it you'll see why these games are sweeping the country. But what else is behind the popularity? It seems that everyone has his own pet theory.

Some people will argue that there are no challenges left in the world today. There are no dragons to slay, no frontiers to conquer left around. So a person plays these games in hope of finding these lost adventures. Perhaps today's sterile world really needs these adventures of the mind.

On the other hand, there are other people who look at society today and say that people have lost contact with each other. The feeling that we are somehow cutoff from others. The social aspect of the game, the interaction in, may be what some people are looking for.

Others say it is the natural development of a society that has been turned off to winning by the U.S. experience in Vietnam. If there is a decline in the need to win, then these games fit right in. There is no concept of winning in these games; there are only challenges to be met. You don't win money or land, you just get a chance to improve your character. With his added experience you can take him to another game.

Maybe it's just a fad. I don't think so. It's probably the forerunner of the future. Join in and find out. △

# ADVENTURES IN GAMING

By MIKE KILBERT

The growth and success of fantasy gaming means that you the gamer will find more and better products on the market. With this growing interest, manufacturers have expanded their product lines to meet your wishes. Five years ago, gamers were pretty much forced to buy anything that was available, now the choice seems endless. The fierce competition among manufacturers has improved the quality and selection in gaming items.

For example, Superior Models—for quite a while Superior has produced some of the finest historical and fantasy/science fiction figures on the market, but they were always in the larger scales (75mm and above, or about 3 inches tall and larger). These figures were appropriate for dioramas and as collector pieces, but they were not really suitable for gaming purposes. Since many of you buy figures for use in your games, it was only natural that they would eventually introduce a 25mm line for both gaming and smaller diorama work. These one-inch-tall figures were designed by Ray Lamb, one of the finest sculptors around. But that's only to be expected since Superior is *superior*. This expansion on their part is a recognition that you want quality figures like this Wizards & Lizards series. (For more information, contact: ALNAVCO, P.O. Box 9, Belle Haven, VA 23306)

The other big news on the fantasy

gaming scene is Knights & Magick from Heritage Models (9840 Monroe Dr. No., 116 Dallas, TX 75220). It is what I would call a "total system." The "heart" of the system is a five-booklet rules set, which is a very complete set of rules for both fantasy role-playing and miniatures combat.

But as I said, this very complete gaming system is just the heart, there is much more. There are two Paint 'n Play sets: Merlin the Wizard and Knights of King Arthur. Both of these sets include 25mm lead figures, paints, a brush, special game rules, and a painting guide. The rules for the Merlin set were designed by Greg Stafford of Runequest fame and it is described as a game of "magical encounters." The King Arthur set with fourteen figures is designed to introduce the gamer to "knightly combat." To complete the "system" there is a line of 25mm medieval/fantasy figures which are available in smaller sets.

Why has Heritage decided to release a fantasy gaming system? Because they feel that there are enough of you out there to justify such a product line. Late-breaking news: Heritage has announced that there will be a nationwide promotion to kick off the release of their Knights and Magick line. It will include a miniatures gaming tournament and a painting competition. There will be prizes, special gifts for all who enter, etc. See your local dealer or contact Heritage.



Gameshop has added a sci-fi board game, TIMELAB and a Norse mythology game, THE HAMMER OF THOR



to their ever-expanding line. (Gameshop, 46 Dougherty St., Manchester, Conn., 06040).



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## Adventure Gaming (continued)



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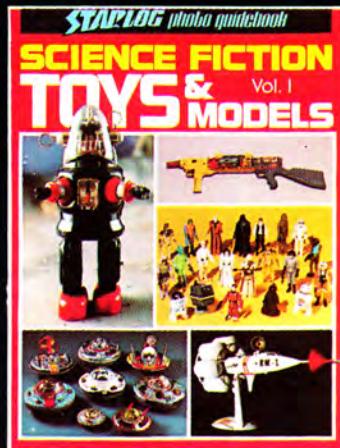


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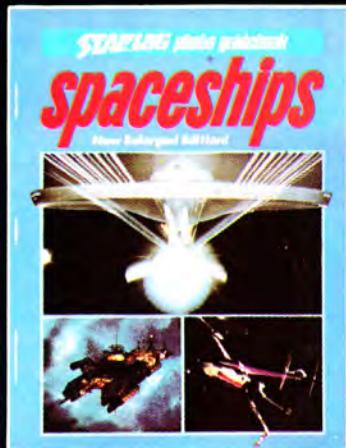
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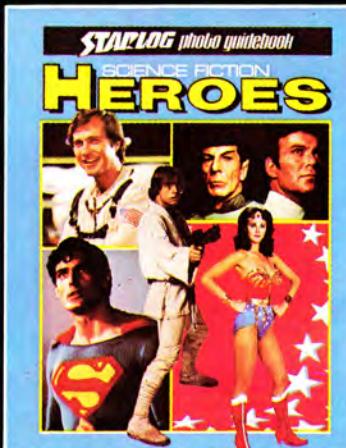
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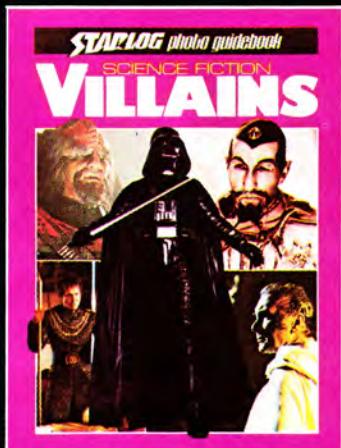
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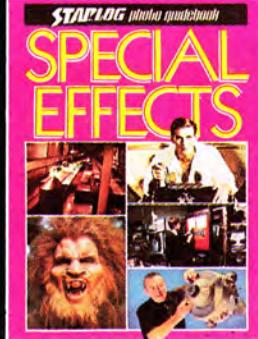


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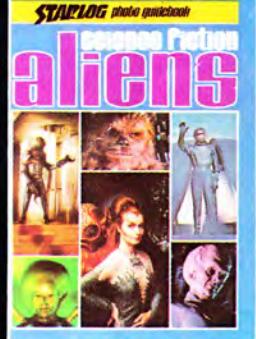
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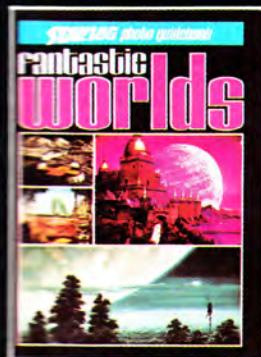
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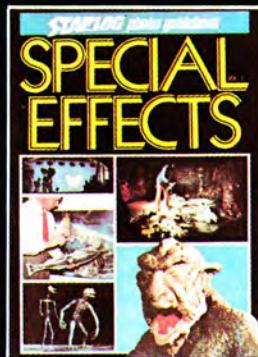
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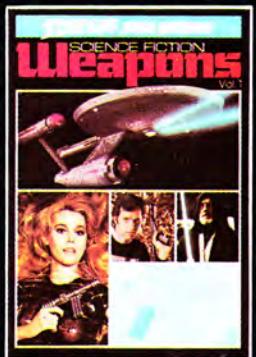
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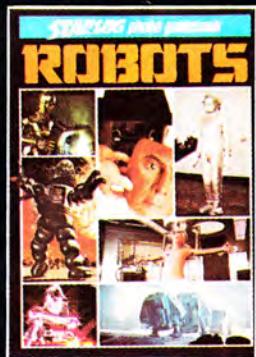
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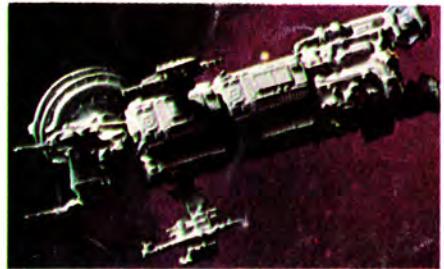
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